

InterPark

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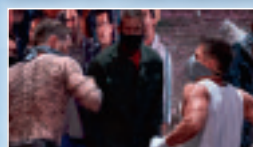
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Park Life
Soaky Mountain
Waterpark, US



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Taking the positives from the negatives

Andrew Mellor **Editor**

LIKE so many business sectors throughout the world, the park and attractions industry has suffered like never before as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and we continue to hear a variety of stories about how venues are struggling through these difficult times.

Things continue to change on an almost daily basis depending on where you may be and as restrictions are lifted more and more, although this is helping to get things moving again, many sectors are still experiencing major problems. It is clearly going to be a long time before anything gets back to anywhere near what we could consider "normal."

Some of the figures being banded about as to how COVID-19 has hit the attractions industry are quite incredible. A couple of weeks ago (as I write this column in early September) I saw a report put out by IAAPA that US theme parks had, at that point, lost \$18bn and cut 125,000 jobs as a result of closures and delayed openings due to the pandemic. And that's just in the US.

Elsewhere similar scenarios are to be found with redundancies of full time staff being made, reduced numbers of seasonal staff being taken on, hotels being shuttered and some parks not opening at all in 2020. Some have even succumbed completely and have sadly had to close their gates permanently. Spikes in the virus in some countries have also impacted on parks and other attraction venues, leaving those who did open having to adjust opening times, reduce operating days, cancel events (Halloween, for example, is going to be quite different for many parks) and continually fine tune general operations as the crowds that were hoped for once restrictions started to ease didn't materialise. It seems people are still very wary of visiting somewhere where they could be in close contact with others, despite all the precautions being taken and the reduced numbers allowed into venues.

And as if we didn't have enough to deal with at the moment, one story I also read recently really ticked me off (and that's putting it politely!) This concerned a member of staff at a park who was hospitalised after being punched by both a male and female guests when he had asked them to adhere to the rules in place and wear a face mask. I simply don't understand such people and why they are so against protecting themselves and others and for staff to have to deal with that sort of guest when they are just doing their job is very sad.

But as we all continue to deal with the pandemic in the best way we can, rather than be negative about the whole thing perhaps we can also think about some of the opportunities the situation might throw up as we navigate our way through the coming months. As our regular contributor Dennis Spiegel notes in his column in this issue of *InterPark*, some operators are using what has become a quieter time at their venues to take stock and look at how they can run their businesses more efficiently and perhaps do some things differently. They have also looked in depth at areas of their businesses that they may not have looked at in detail for a long time but which with some attention could improve the overall operation.

Our contributor Louis Alfieri also puts a more positive spin on things in an article in which he discusses the challenges and opportunities the current situation provides. He outlines that it is pushing us all to find new solutions and to do things differently and potentially better and more efficiently. This will certainly be one positive outcome of the pandemic as it is simply human nature to strive to overcome problems, to learn and to discover new and better ways of doing things.

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how parks are analysing their businesses during periods of closure

Supporters of:



Calendar

September 30–October 2

RAAPA Expo Autumn 2020, Pavilion 75, VDNH, Moscow, RUSSIA
Contact: RAAPA
Tel: +7 495 234 5204
Email: raapa@raapa.ru
www.raapa.ru

October 6–9

WWA Show 2020, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
Contact: WWA, 8826 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 310, Overland Park, KS 66212, USA
Tel: +1 913 599 0300
Email: patty@waterparks.org
www.waterparks.org

October 17–19

CAE Beijing 2020, China International Exhibition Centre, Shunyi New Venue, Beijing, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

October 28–30

TAAPE 2020, Impact Exhibition and Convention Centre, Bangkok, THAILAND
Contact: Guangdong Grandeur International Exhibition Group
Tel: +86 20 2210 6418
Fax: +86 20 8257 9220
Email: info@grandeurint.com
www.taape.cn

November 11–12

Family Attraction Expo 2020, NEC Birmingham, UK
Contact: 4 Colston Ave., Bristol, BS1 2NT, UK
Tel: +44 (0)117 930 4927
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

November 17–19

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE
Contact: Reed MIDEM, 27 Quai Alphonse Le Gallo, CS 10026 Boulogne, FRANCE
Tel: +33 179 71 95 15
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com
www.mapic.com

November 17–20

IAAPA Attractions Expo, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida 32837, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

Cancelled

2021

February 4–6

Atrax '21. 9th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition, Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY
Contact: Tureks International Fairs Co.
Tel: +90 212 570 63 05
Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr
www.tureksfuar.com.tr

February 24–26

8th Events & Amusement Expo Tokyo, Makuhari Messe, Tokyo, Japan
Contact: Reed Exhibitions Japan Ltd.
Tel: +813 3349 8510
Email: eventexpo.eng@reedexpo.co.jp
www.eventexpo.jp/en-gb.html

March 25–27

CAE Beijing 2021, China International Exhibition Centre, Shunyi New Venue, Beijing, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org


May 24–26

Saudi Entertainment & Amusement Expo, Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA
Contact: DMG Events
Tel: +9 6612 697 0287
Email: marketing@saudientertainmentandamusement.com
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

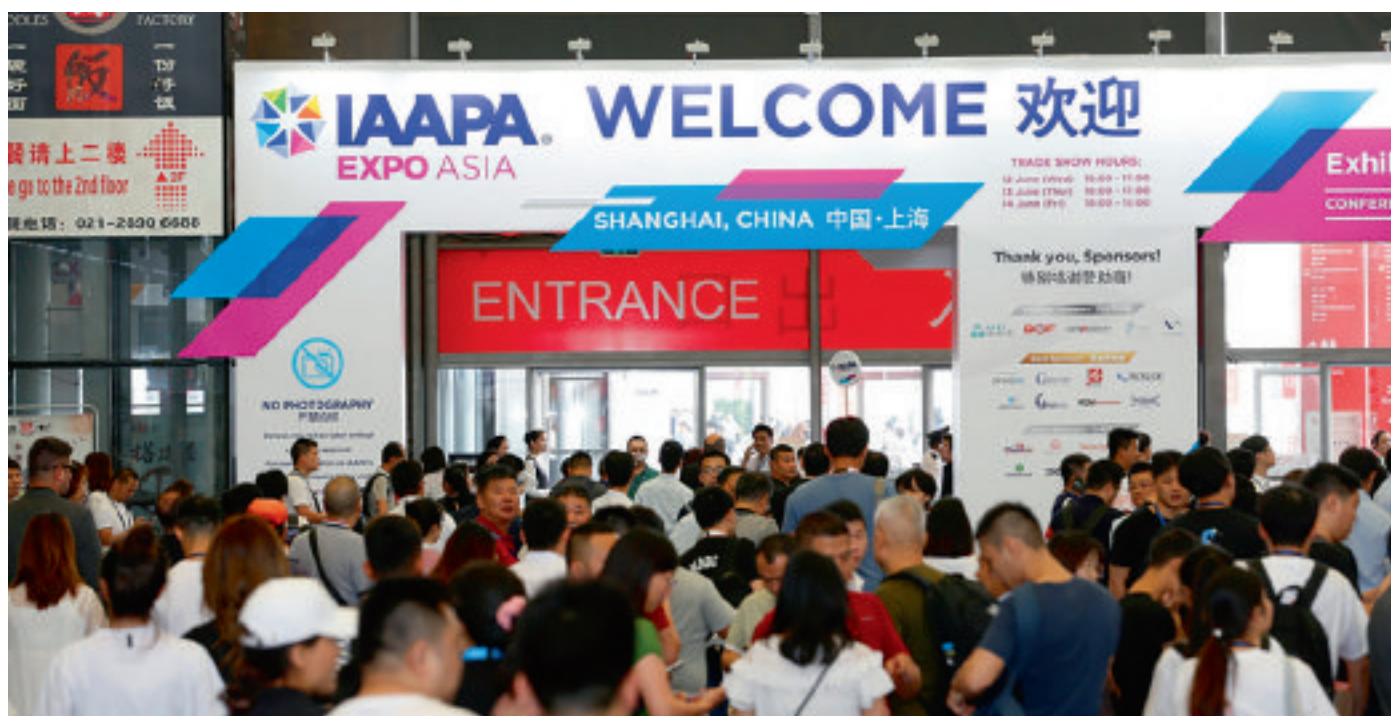
June 7–10

IAAPA Expo Asia 2021, Venetian Macao, MACAO
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida 32837, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

As dates sometimes change, please check with organisers before visiting international trade events.

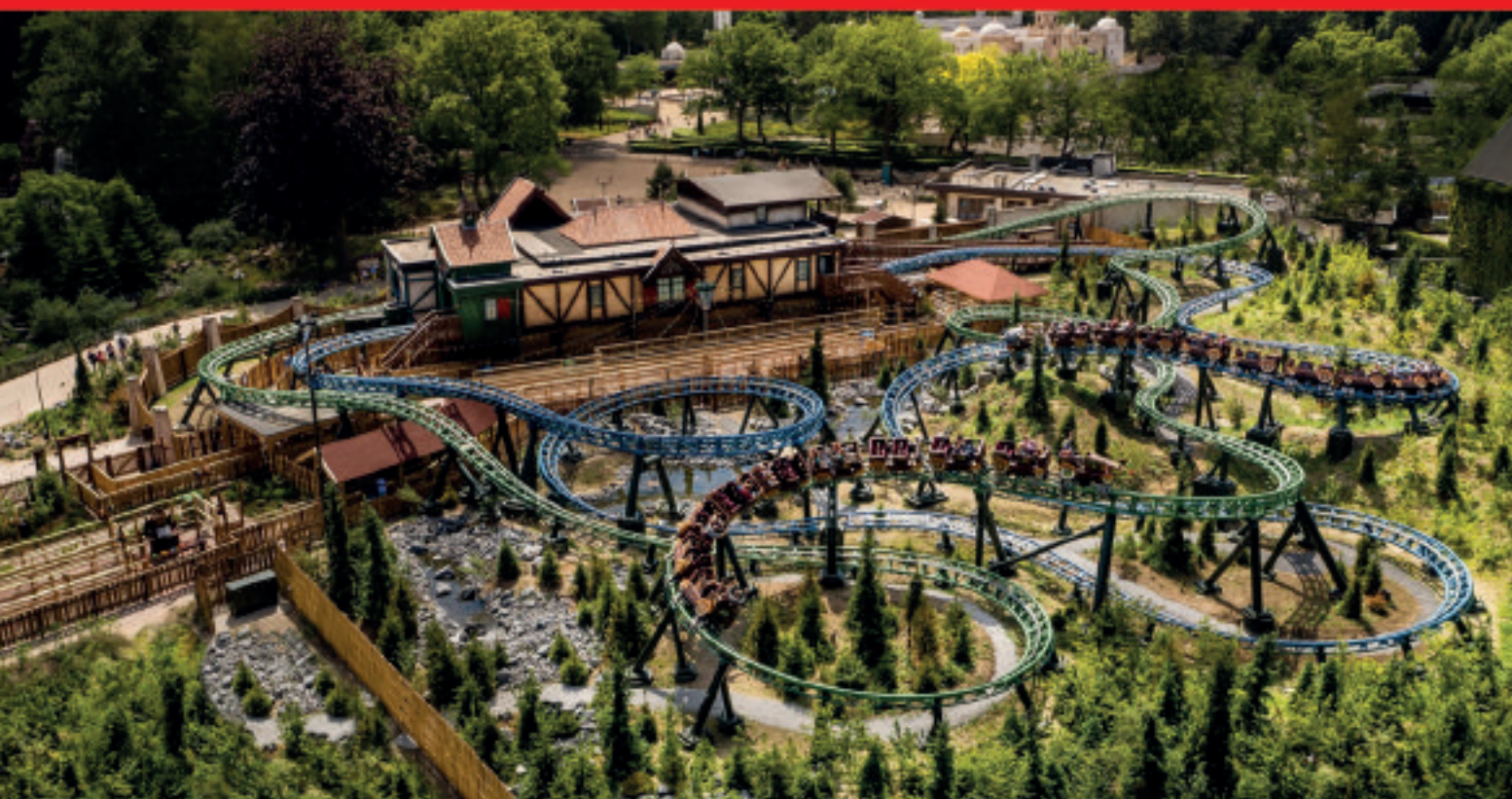
 Additional copies of **InterPark** distributed at these events.

Trade show plans continue to be disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic but among those due to take place in 2021 is the IAAPA Expo Asia in Macao, which is scheduled to be held from June 7 to 10 at the Venetian Macao





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Zamperla introduces Wash-Through Ride System

ZAMPERLA has developed a new system designed to help park operators contain the spread of viruses and bacteria.

The Wash-Through Ride System provides park and attraction sites with a simple and practical solution to sanitising roller coasters. The system comprises a tunnel or structure which is suspended above a ride vehicle. The vehicle is then cleansed via a mist between the unloading and loading of guests. Vehicles can also be cleansed when riders are still seated, depending on the preference of the park's operators. The sanitising action is 45 seconds long and a cycle can be activated after every five or 10 rides.

The sanitising solution mist is colourless, odourless and non-alcohol based. Its biocidal action lasts for up to 18 hours on surfaces and vehicles are left neither wet nor humid. The system can also be customised to blend in with the theming of a specific roller coaster, so it is not too invasive or conspicuous. With automatic disinfection rather than manual cleansing, queuing times for rides are significantly reduced and the sanitisation process is more efficient.

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a series of challenges for theme parks around the world. Virus-proof coaster seats are an effective way to ensure theme parks conform to regulations and restrictions, helping visitors and staff remain safe.



Sally contributes to record-breaking year for leading parks

SALLY Dark Rides has reported a record-breaking year in 2019 for two of its clients' theme parks.

Hersheypark and PortAventura World, both of which partnered with Sally Dark Rides to add interactive dark rides to their roster of attractions, enjoyed record-breaking attendances last year. According to the 2019 TEA/AECOM Theme Index, both venues were in the 20 most attended parks for their respective regions.

Sally designed and produced Sesame Street: Street Mission, which made its debut at PortAventura World in April 2019. The almost six minute long attraction was historic in the sense that it was the first Sesame Street-themed dark ride in Europe.

In the record-breaking year for PortAventura, attendance increased by 2.7 per cent. Attracting around 3.75m visits, the Spanish attraction venue was the sixth most visited theme park in Europe. Season pass sales at PortAventura grew by 20 per cent in 2019.

Further success was also enjoyed by Hersheypark in Pennsylvania, US. Sally's Reese's Cupfusion attraction debuted at the park in the summer of 2019, the story-based gaming attraction being created in partnership with Raven Sun Creative. Attendance at Hersheypark increased by 0.5 per cent last year, with the park pulling in around 3.4m visits.



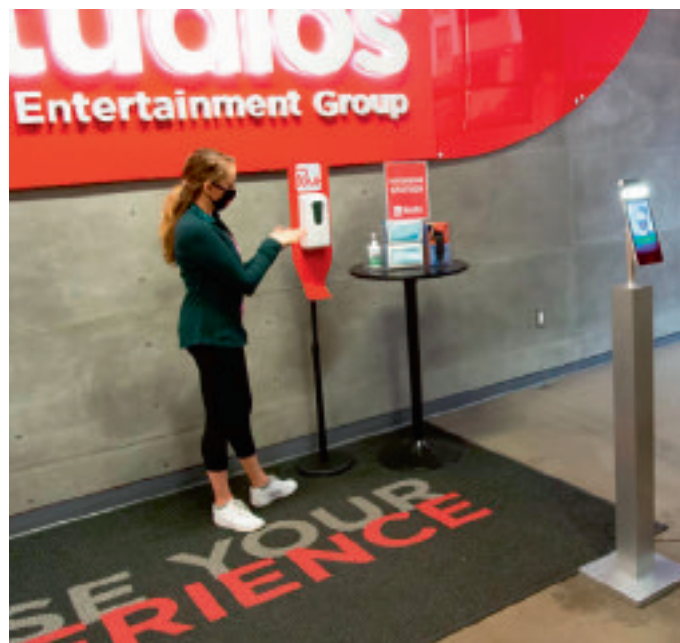
RWS partners with CrowdRX to create health protocols for performing artists

RWS Entertainment Group, an award-winning, full-service production company that develops branded experiences globally, has partnered with CrowdRX, a team of public safety experts who specialise in mitigating health risks during mass gatherings.

Working together, the two organisations are developing a series of protocols designed to standardise the safety and protection of performers in the live entertainment industry across the globe.

The Health and Hygiene Protocol for Performing Artists is a practical guide which sets the standards for entertainment operators to carry out safe rehearsals and shows. These health and sanitation protocols are specifically tailored for the unique needs of the entertainment industry. They include recommendations for the likes of costume character sanitation, performer PPE requirements, performer and musician physical distancing, backstage crew sanitation guidelines and more.

Dr. Matt Friedman, CrowdRX's national medical director, commented on the collaboration, saying: "When RWS came to me with this challenge, we started with the CDC public health safety guidelines – but we didn't stop there. Live production calls for additional measures that we tailored specifically for the safety of both the performers and the audience in the experiential entertainment industry."



Jeff Schilling awarded Industry Innovator Award

JEFF Schilling, founder of Creative Works, has been awarded the Industry Innovator Award. The award was presented by the Laser Tag Museum.

The rare accolade is just the third time someone has been given the status in the 36-year history of the laser tag industry. Schilling was presented with the honour for his efforts in "pioneering, creating and promoting incredibly immersive themed environments for the laser tag industry."

Schilling founded Creative Works in 1997. At the time, laser tag was upcoming and Schilling had a vision to create and promote immersive themed environments within the industry. Today, Creative Works has installed over 500 immersive laser tag facilities across four continents. Collectively the laser tag arenas attract around 30 million players every year.



IAAPA cancels IAAPA Expo 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic

IAAPA has announced the cancellation of IAAPA Expo 2020 in Orlando, Florida, in November, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the association has revealed it is launching a new virtual conference for global attractions industry professionals so that they can take part in many of the education sessions originally planned to take place during the IAAPA Expo.

"IAAPA Expo serves as the global marketplace for the attractions industry," said Hal McEvoy, president and CEO, IAAPA. "We recognise this year there are many challenges facing our members from around the world. Together with input from members, exhibitors, the IAAPA Board of Directors and our team, we have decided to cancel this year's Expo due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. The continuing barriers to international and domestic travel coupled with the evolving guidance on mass gatherings and members' need to focus on their businesses helped lead to this decision."

"While we are disappointed we are unable to meet in-person this year, we are already looking ahead to IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando," McEvoy continued, "We also appreciate the patience, support and commitment from our dedicated IAAPA Expo exhibitors. The IAAPA team has already pivoted to address finding new ways industry manufacturers and suppliers can connect with their customers to promote their products, discover new trends and make plans for the future."

Current contracted IAAPA Expo 2020 exhibitors should contact the IAAPA global sales team at ExhibitSales@IAAPA.org to discuss options related to the cancellation and next steps. IAAPA is moving forward with plans to host IAAPA Expo Asia 2021, scheduled to take place in Macao, China, from June 7 to 10, IAAPA Expo Europe 2021 in Barcelona, Spain, from September 28 to 30, and IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando, Florida, from November 16 to 19.

The IAAPA Expo Virtual Education Conference will take place from November 16 to 18, the same week IAAPA Expo was originally planned for. Participants will be able to virtually attend 25 sessions and two keynote presentations. These sessions were part of IAAPA Expo's conference programme and will feature leading industry professionals. Additional details and registration information will be available online at IAAPA.org

WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLDWIDE Juice Productions, creators of video, 2D and 3D animation and photography, has announced a new, cost-effective solution to producing soaring films. The company's unique drone system provides a more affordable option to helicopters, with quality remote aerial cinematography. Known as the Cobra X, the drone captures an unparalleled field of view and can also capture angles wider than 180 degrees. It is designed to feel like a gimbal mounted helicopter. With a custom-designed flight angle, the Cobra X can provide straight shots followed by sweeping turns. Extra enhancements to the model include an extended flight time of up to four miles and the ability to reach speeds of 70 to 80mph.

EUROPE Spreepark, the abandoned theme park in the Berlin district of Treptow-Köpenick, is to be gradually made accessible to the public once more. Construction work to develop the old theme park is scheduled to begin this year, with plans to open the first parts of the redeveloped park in 2022. A framework plan for the new site has been in development from 2016 to 2018 "in dialogue with the population."

US Walt Disney World has announced changes to its health and safety protocol at the park. In a bid to tighten mask-wearing criteria, the park has banned the use of face masks with breathing valves and/or holes. Disney has confirmed all face coverings must fully cover the mouth and nose and secure under the chin; be made with at least two layers of breathable material; fit comfortably but snugly against the side of the face; and fasten with ear loops or ties to enable visitors to be hands-free.

CHINA The first phase of Ruzhou Lewa City in Henan Province, China, is now underway. The site has a total investment of CNY12bn (approx. US\$1.715bn) and extends over an area of around 195 hectares, which will feature Hot Spring World, an arts city and a five-star hotel. The performing arts city combines a number of elements, including special effect performances, live outdoor performances and an indoor multi-dimensional compound.



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Drayton Manor Park sold to Looping Group

DRAYTON Manor, the family-run theme park near Tamworth, Staffordshire, UK, has been sold. The park, which opened in 1950 and is one of the oldest theme parks in Europe, has confirmed it has been sold in a multi-million pound deal to Looping Group, the European leisure chain.

The deal with Looping Group has saved almost 600 jobs at the resort. Drayton Manor's William Bryan, grandson of the founders George and Vera Bryan, will be staying on as managing director as the park fights through a "challenging period."

Drayton Manor was hit hard by Storm Dennis in February 2020, which forced it to temporarily close, and has been impacted again by the coronavirus pandemic. The park and zoo attract more than one million visitors each year and will continue to operate under the name of Drayton Manor Resort Ltd.

William Bryan shared his enthusiasm about the deal with Looping Group, commenting: "Like many businesses, we have faced challenges over recent months, but the sale to the Looping Group is an exciting and positive new chapter for Drayton Manor Park. For us, finding a buyer who would protect jobs was key, as was finding one who would continue to operate and develop the Drayton Manor Park our guests know and love."

Europa-Park to remain open for 'HALLOWinter'

FOR the first time in its history, Europa-Park, Germany's largest theme park, will remain open between the Halloween and winter seasons.

Named 'HALLOWinter,' the season will offer guests the chance to experience a combination of spooky attractions and events and beautiful winter weeks. From November 9 until November 27, Europa-Park will be decorated in a Halloween/winter inspired wonderland. Witches in red pointed hats, elaborately decorated pumpkin figures and roasted almonds served with mulled wine will play centre stage in the HALLOWinter event.

Additionally, an ice-rink and ski slope are being prepared in the Scandinavian themed area of the park, while in the Greek area, guests will be able to enjoy the Poseidon water coaster. Another key feature of the season will undoubtedly be Europa-Park's newly rebuilt themed adventure ride for all the family, Pirates in Batavia.

The theme park's Halloween season begins on September 26 and runs until November 8. The winter season starts on November 28 and runs until January 10, 2021.



Holovis moves to new headquarters

HOLOVIS, specialist in the creation of immersive and mixed reality attractions, has moved to a new purpose-designed headquarters in Hinckley, Leicestershire, UK.

The 52,000sq.ft premises are housed in the building which was the former home of the Triumph Motorcycles Works. The huge open-plan collaboration space features a 6,500sq.ft demonstration facility and a 30,000sq.ft-plus space dedicated to new projects, attraction mock-ups and full show run-throughs.

On arrival at the headquarters, visitors are greeted by a virtual concierge which utilises attribute recognition technology to correctly identify each guest. The virtual concierge then logs each visitor in securely and connects them to their Holovis host.



The new venue is equipped with a full innovation R&D capability designed to fast-track the development of proprietary Holovis IPs, such as HoloTrac. With R&D capability, the guest experience at the headquarters is extended, as are security protocols and real-time safety. With the Holovis DeepSmarts data analytics engine, automated social distancing and staff capacity handling is also achieved.

Stuart Hetherington, CEO of Holovis, commented on the opening of the new headquarters: "We are looking forward to inviting our clients, prospective customers, partners and suppliers to an opening launch event when the time is right."

"This has been a challenging year for all businesses, especially the entertainment and hospitality sectors we work in, but we are now seeing positive signs of recovery, with themed entertainment destinations reopening, global design and installation projects resuming and new contracts being signed. Innovation remains central to the company's mission and we are excited to be on track to continue our strong growth trajectory well into 2021 working with our global clients to deliver truly world-class experiences."

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Parques Reunidos appoints Pascal Ferracci as new CEO

PARQUES Reunidos, the international entertainment group headquartered in Spain, has appointed a new CEO, with Pascal Ferracci taking over from Jesus Fernandez, the group's current CEO.

Ferracci has been CEO of Center Parcs Europe since October 2018, as well as chairman of the Board of Management of Centre Parcs Europe. He is also a member of the Pierre & Vacances Center Parcs Group Executive Committee, where he was appointed as deputy chief financial officer in 2000. In a press statement, Parques Reunidos said: "Pascal brings strong knowledge and experience in the leisure industry. We would like to welcome Pascal to the Parques Reunidos family."

Jesus Fernandez is returning to his former role as COO of Parques Reunidos. Fernandez has played a pivotal role in leading the Parques Reunidos Group during recent months and will continue to be a key member of the management team.



Therme Group announces plans to develop wellbeing resorts in Britain

THERME Group, specialists in developing advanced wellbeing resorts, has revealed plans to build wellbeing resorts across the UK.

The announcement comes in the wake of a £250m wellbeing resort in Manchester being approved. As well as Manchester, Therme Group's development plans include creating similar resorts in Wales, Scotland and London. All wellness centres will be built at locations not far from city centres.

Visitors will be able to experience different thermal bathing traditions from around the world, in sites that combine nature, sustainable technology and culture. The destinations will be accessible to all, providing fun and healthy activities for all ages.

Therme Group is committed to making wellness centres affordable and socially inclusive, so that wider members of communities can benefit from the health and mental well-being of preventative healthcare.

James Mark, Therme Group UK's chief operating officer, said: "Our resorts provide a vital piece of social infrastructure in our cities, creating relaxing and fun places to meet while also nurturing mental and physical health. Our aim is to ensure that a Therme Group wellbeing resort is within easy reach of 90 per cent of the UK population."



Alterface launches new interactive tournament attraction, Action League

ALTERFACE, manufacturer of interactive and media-based attractions, has introduced its latest attraction creation, Action League, The Interactive Revolution.

The innovative attraction combines tournament, interactive gaming and motion. Multiple players compete against each other in a sporty stadium featuring a rotating platform. Sound effects accompany each bounce, tilt and rotate, in what is a high-paced and energetic environment.

Hailed as the first unique interactive tournament experience between all participating visitors, Action League features one large room in which the competition takes place. From here, the teams compete across three to five different scenes.

Each game lasts between two and three minutes, with 1.5 to 2.5 minutes of motion between games. Several competition formulas are available, including competing between two teams, each in a vehicle, against other visitors in the same vehicle and through a scoreboard.

Action League's largest format can accommodate 72 players across 12 teams in vehicles which seat six players. The standard format comprises six teams of six people in each vehicle.

Stéphane Bataille, CEO of Alterface, commented: "We are very excited about this new ride, which truly combines different levels of sensation and amusement into a completely new formula. Parks and leisure venues can obtain a major competitive edge by offering such a technological high-level gaming experience, combined with the rotating thrill."

Parc Astérix partners with acceso for new virtual queuing model

PARC Astérix, the second largest theme park in France, has partnered with acceso, providers of technological solutions for the entertainment, leisure and cultural markets. Parc Astérix is to integrate acceso's "100 per cent virtual queuing model" to launch Filotomatix, a free-of-charge virtual queuing facility.

Filotomatix is powered by acceso LoQueue, a virtual queuing solution. The model is designed to provide guests with a safe, reliable and efficient way to virtually queue for the park's rides and attractions. Guests can access Filotomatix with ease via the Qsmart platform from their smartphone. Alternatively, the solution can be accessed with the acceso Prism smartpark wearable.

The virtual queuing platform adjusts to unpredictable elements, such as the weather, or the time taken to sanitise the attraction between guests. The platform automatically updates visitors when it is appropriate to visit the attraction, enabling social distancing measures to be maintained at all times.

Sebastien Retailleau, director general adjoint at Parc Astérix, commented on the partnership with acceso and the integration of the virtual queuing platform: "In acceso, we are pleased to find such a forward-thinking partner to help us welcome back our valued guests with safety and security top of mind. With the introduction of Filotomatix, guests will be freed from physical queues and thus able to enjoy visiting even more of our attractions and shows."

Venetian Carousels



Dark Rides



Bumper Cars



Major Rides



IMG Worlds of Adventure reopens with safety measures in place

IMG Worlds of Adventure in Dubai, has reopened to the public with strict coronavirus safety measures in place.

The safety measures include the installation of thermal cameras at the site's entrances and the sanitisation of rides, ticketing counters, prayer rooms, ATMs and other facilities. Hand sanitisers are placed at the entrance and exit locations of the park's attractions and markers are positioned in queues and other areas, reminding visitors to maintain a safe distance from one another. Employees at IMG Worlds of Adventure wear face masks and shields for added protection.

"The health and safety of our guests and team members has always been our top priority," the park operator said in a statement, adding: "IMG has intensified the cleaning protocol and enforced many extensive deep cleaning and sanitising procedures in the operations SOPs (standard operating procedures) of the park service."

IMG Worlds of Adventure reopened on July 10 following months of closure as part of Dubai's measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

New Covid-19 safety measures prevent theme parks and waterparks from opening in Israel

OFFICIALS in Israel have announced a series of new coronavirus safety measures and restrictions to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The measures include theme parks, waterparks, children's swimming pools, event halls, pubs and discotheques being unable to reopen until further notice.

Additional measures include local authorities erecting signs in playgrounds to remind visitors to maintain social distancing, wear masks and avoid gathering in groups. Shared eating areas in shopping malls and outdoor markets are also prohibited from reopening. The occupancy of public spaces or places of business is limited to one person for every seven metres. Car travel is limited to two people unless passengers are from the same family.

In public spaces, a distance of two metres between each person must be maintained. The new COVID-19 safety measures in Israel went into effect on August 11.



Yas Waterworld reopens in Abu Dhabi

YAS Waterworld Abu Dhabi, an Emirati-themed waterpark on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, has reopened to the public.

Guests visiting the waterpark must make online bookings prior to visiting, so the site can maintain its limited capacity of 30 per cent.

Other health and safety measures include social distancing markers on all rides, attractions and facilities, thermal screening cameras, contactless payments and modified ride capacity.

Leander de Wit, Yas Waterworld's general manager, commented: "It brings me great pleasure to announce the re-opening of Yas Waterworld – we are thrilled to welcome back our guests who have waited patiently for the return of water's greatest playground."

"We would like to reassure our guests and staff that their health and safety remain our top priority and for this reason, comprehensive precautionary measures will be diligently implemented across Yas Waterworld," de Wit added.

Yas Waterworld reopened on August 4.



Sarner International to create new immersive waterpark ride in Qatar

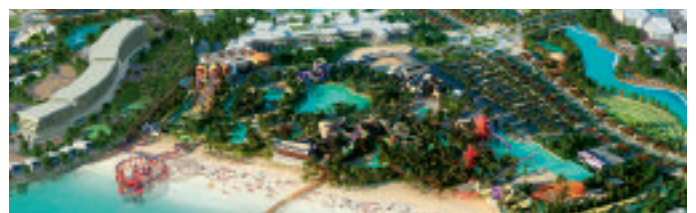
SARNER International, designer and manufacturer of immersive experiences for theme parks and attraction sites around the world, is creating a new immersive ride experience for Qetaifan Island North's waterpark in Qatar.

The new water ride will be centred on telling the story of the transformation of Doha throughout the last century. It will take guests on an immersive journey from Jurassic times into the future, from the depths of the ocean to high up in the air.

Special effects including 3D mapping, animatronics, projection, theatrical light, heat, vibration, drilling machines and fog screens, will enhance the story.

Sarner International are cooperating with curators and experts from leading museums across the globe, to deliver an authentic scientific and history experience for visitors.

Ross Magri, managing director of Sarner International, commented: "Sarner's 50 year experience in both the theme park and museum markets is perfectly suited for this innovative project that combines the two, to create an immersive water ride that is not only fun but also educational. We are therefore delighted to have been awarded the contract, working with some of the best teams in the world to deliver what will be another award-winning project that will stand the test of time."





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Cedar Fair discloses investments and long-term strategy

CEDAR Fair has disclosed its long-term plans to invest in new events, rides and attractions, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its results for Q2 2020.

Cedar Fair parks were forced to closed in mid-March this year due to the outbreak of the health crisis. In a recent presentation to investors, the owner and operator of a number of amusement and theme parks, waterparks and indoor parks, said that 2020 had been disrupted because of the pandemic.

With significantly fewer days in operation, the company's parks witnessed nine million less visitors, earning a net revenue of \$60m compared to \$503m in 2019. However, despite this, the company has announced a proactive and exciting long-term strategy as it prepares for the 2021 season. The long-term plans include broadening the appeal of its parks by adding something new to each venue every year.

Cedar Fair also plans to utilise more limited-duration events, designed to drive a sense of urgency to attract visitors to the parks. The guest experience will also be enhanced with more immersive experiences like Forbidden Frontier.



Carowinds to remain closed in 2020

CAROWINDS, the family amusement park in Charlotte, North Carolina, is to remain closed for the rest of 2020 because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The 400-acre theme park was due to reopen on July 27. However, "continued uncertainty" in the region has meant the operators of Carowinds decided to keep the park shut. Carowinds is operated by Cedar Fair Entertainment Company.

Pat Jones, vice-president and general manager at Carowinds, shared disappointment over the decision to remain closed but said "the safety of our guests and associates is always our top priority."

Michael Johnson, York County Council chairman, described the announcement as "devastating" for tourism and jobs in the county. "This one really hurts. Carowinds is our largest tourist destination in York County. It provides thousands of full-time and seasonal jobs for adults and young people," he said.

When Carowinds reopens, guests will be able to enjoy new attractions, including the Boogie Board Racer, the longest mat racing slide in the South East.

Safety-adhering Fright Fest to return to Six Flags parks, renamed Halloweenfest

SIX Flags parks are to host a COVID-19-conscious version of the popular Fright Fest event this Halloween. Dubbed as Halloweenfest, the event will feature outdoor haunts and scare zones, while following a range of health and safety protocols.

In order to achieve this, Halloweenfest will not incorporate the traditional Fright Fest indoor mazes and haunted mazes. Instead, there will be outdoor haunted trails and scare zones, enabling the parks to maintain safety measures. Actors dressed as haunted characters will wear face masks and maintain social distancing.

Six Flag St. Louis will showcase a Vampire Bar, Clowns of the Blacktop Circus and Backlot Creatures as part of its outdoor haunted attractions. There will also be scare zones along the park's paths.

Halloweenfest will be held on dates throughout September and October at Six Flags parks in Missouri, Texas, Maryland, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Georgia.



Premier Rides awarded biggest ever service contract

PREMIER Service, a division of Premier Rides, best known for its high-tech magnetic launch roller coasters, has been awarded its largest service contract to date.

The company will be producing a new fleet of trains in addition to providing other tech upgrades for a non-Premier Rides' attraction. The trains will utilise the advanced technology used on the Sky Rocket attractions. Combining enhanced rider comfort with high speed and thrill elements, the Sky Rocket series has proven popular among guests.

The trains will also feature new, precision-machined, lightweight technologies in order to adapt to a ride's existing track design. The Premier team aims to have the trains available for the 2021 season. The upgrade is designed to heighten the ride experience for guests, so they are motivated to ride on an attraction multiple times.

Jim Seay, president of Premier Rides, commented: "We are honoured to be able to provide a fantastic technical upgrade to a truly iconic roller coaster. Fans will be excited when the location of the effort is announced. The Sky Rocket attractions continue to be recognised for their advanced technology and superior rider comfort and the Premier team is certain that the addition of these newest generation of trains will take this coaster's ride experience to the next level."



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IAAPA urges US Congress to support attractions industry

THE global association for the attractions industry is calling on Congress to consider making critical changes and providing additional aid to the attractions sector in the United States.

IAAPA forecasts that the coronavirus pandemic will generate \$23 billion in economic downturn for the attractions industry in 2020. Across the US, over 235,000 jobs have been lost due to 50 per cent of attraction venues having to make adjustments to staffing and many sites not reopening in 2020.

In collaboration with member attractions and medical experts, IAAPA has developed guidance designed to help sites make the appropriate changes to ensure a safe experience for guests and employees.

Hal McEvoy, president and CEO of IAAPA, commented: "As our industry looks to reopen, locations are doing so at a substantially reduced capacity and with additional costs due to new COVID-19 safety protocols.

"This has been devastating for our industry, particularly for seasonal businesses. These businesses rely on making enough revenue during the few short summer months they are open to maintain employment year-round. In addition, year-round businesses that experience peak attendance from spring break through the summer months have been substantially hurt by the pandemic," McEvoy added.

IAAPA is urging Congress to consider providing theme parks and attractions with Small Business Administration Loans (PPA), tax credits, liability protection, federal backstop for pandemic risk insurance, animal care financial assistance and support for severely impacted businesses.



Universal won't be holding Halloween Horror Nights events in 2020

IN response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Universal Orlando Resort and Universal Studios Hollywood have announced the annual Halloween Horror Nights events will not be taking place in 2020.

Halloween Horror Nights will return in 2021. Ticket holders for the events have the option to rollover their tickets to 2021 or be issued a refund.

The operator's decision to cancel the popular events was made so it could concentrate on the safe operation of its theme parks for daytime guests. Universal Studios in Florida and California said they had "made the difficult decision to not hold Halloween Horror Nights events this year."

"Universal Orlando Resort will be focusing exclusively on operating its theme parks for daytime guests, using the enhanced health and safety procedures already in place," a statement said, adding: "Universal Studios Hollywood continues to face ongoing business restrictions and uncertainty around its opening timeframe."



Kings Island announces all-new Tricks and Treats Fall Fest

KINGS Island, the 364-acre amusement park in Ohio, has announced an all-new Tricks and Treats Fall Fest for 2020.

The family-friendly Halloween event will be a first-of-its-kind festival to ensure visitors enjoy the season safely. Trick or treating will be on the agenda, with guests dressed in spooky costumes hunting for candy. A series of tasting stations will be installed around the park, offering visitors a selection of sweet and savoury snacks.

There will also be a traditional fall festival with autumnal-themed games, mazes, crafts and shows for all the family. Certain rides and attractions will be open throughout the event. Social distancing measures will be in place during the festival and sanitisation processes will also be set up to ensure a safe environment.

Tricks and Treats Fall Fest is taking place on Saturdays and Sundays from September 26 until November 1.

Old Mill dark ride at Kennywood Park gets a new look



THE Old Mill dark ride at Kennywood amusement park in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, is back in operation, boasting a fresh new look.

The ride's retheme was carried out by the creative team at ScareHouse. The haunted house attraction is one of the oldest rides at Kennywood and is regarded as one of the best haunted attractions in the United States.

ScareHouse developed a compelling new design that brings both thrill and humour to the ride. The attraction operated as Garfield's Nightmare for 15 years but has now returned to its original Old Mill identity. It is the oldest operating version of a water-based, chute-style dark ride.

The attraction features Hard Headed Harold, a skeleton with bright blue eyes who lives in the Wild West. The ride runs for five minutes, floating guests along 1,000ft of water in a trough, backed by scary, black-lit scenes.



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Ardent Leisure and Village Roadshow to receive \$70m cash injection

ARDENT Leisure and Village Roadshow, operators of Gold Coast theme parks in Australia, are to each receive cash injections of \$70m. The funding will provide the parks with some security during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ardent Leisure is the operator of Dreamworld and WhiteWater World. Village Roadshow (VRL) operates Sea World, Warner Bros. Movie World, Wet 'n' Wild Gold Coast and Paradise Country.

The funding for VRL is coming from the Queensland Treasury Corporation and its existing lenders. The company says the injection of cash will cover its cash requirements for the next 12 months. Ardent Leisure's funding is being supplied by the Queensland government's COVID-19 industry support package. The financial assistance is made up of a \$69.9m loan and a \$3m grant, which is free of interest, fees or repayment terms.

Dr Gary Weiss, chairman of Ardent Leisure, and theme parks CEO, John Osborne, commented: "We appreciate the Queensland Government's strong recognition of the important role that the theme park industry plays in the economic development of Queensland and the broader tourism industry in Australia."



Japan's Ghibli Park set to open in autumn 2022

CONSTRUCTION has been resumed of Ghibli Park theme park in the Aichi Prefecture, Japan, and the park is on course to open in the autumn of 2022.



Building work for the new theme park was suspended earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Hideaki Omura, Aichi Prefecture governor, confirmed the situation surrounding the park, stating: "We are still on track and are planning to open the park in fall 2022."

Ghibli Park is to feature five themed lands, all inspired by a different Studio Ghibli Japanese animation. These include My Neighbour Totoro-themed Dondoko Forest, Ghibli's Giant Warehouse and Princess Mononoke Village.

The park will also be home to Witch Valley, centred on Kiki's Delivery Service, and Springtime of Life Hill, which will feature attractions from Howl's Moving Castle and Castle in the Sky.

A key feature of Springtime of Life Hill will be a giant elevator, where guests will be able to enjoy views of the park. Ghibli's Giant Warehouse will be home to a video exhibition room and an exhibition room, as well as play areas and shops.



IAAPA Virtual Expo Asia attracts global industry professionals

IAAPA held its first ever virtual expo and conference at the end of July. The IAAPA Virtual Expo Asia attracted more than 4,000 participants, with 131 companies exhibiting on the virtual trade show floor.

The international exhibition hall featured eight unique pavilions, where nine educational sessions took place along with seven IAAPA networking events. 21 speakers from around the world presented at the virtual conference, talking about pressing topics facing the industry and best practices for the safe reopening of parks and attractions.

June Ko, executive director and vice-president, IAAPA Asia Pacific, commented: "IAAPA's first Virtual Expo truly reflects the resilience and strength of the global attractions industry. Our goal was to provide an innovative, timely new experience that brought the industry together. Our dedicated committee volunteers helped create an education conference and worked throughout to support each session."

India investing heavily in park and attraction sites

INDIA is investing heavily in theme parks and other tourist attraction sites, including a Buddhist theme park at Futala, an energy park at Koradi and a tourism circuit in Saurashtra.

The Buddhist theme park is located at Futala Lake and is costing around \$134m to develop and construct. The energy park comes with an investment of approximately \$17m and will be situated next to the temple at Koradi. This will showcase a number of power projects, including a miniature model of the Koradi Super Thermal Power Station.

The park will also feature a solar energy garden, interpretation centre, wind energy garden, hydro energy garden, biomass energy garden and vocational training centre.

The tourism circuit in Saurashtra will comprise temples, beaches and lions. Vijay Rupani, chief minister of Gujarat, commented on the new tourist circuit project, saying: "The Gujarat government is mulling developing a tourist circuit involving pilgrim places, beaches in Saurashtra and the pride of Gujarat, lions of Gir Forest, and chalking out a circuit surrounding all these places," said Rupani.



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Award Categories

- ◆ Outstanding Suppliers Awards
- ◆ Outstanding Chinese Parks Awards
- ◆ Outstanding Chinese Investors Awards
- ◆ Special Award

Awards Process

Stage 1: Enterprise Application.

August 26 - September 26

Stage 2: Expert review.

October 10 - November 10

Stage 3: Online voting.

November 16 - November 22

Stage 4: Award.

December 10



Online Application



Rainbow's End debuts new Triotech dark ride

RAINBOW'S End, the largest theme park in New Zealand, has installed a 28-seat dark ride interactive theatre from Triotech.

The Spectra XD Dark Ride is a 3D experience that combines movies and games to entertain the whole family. As well as 3D movies, players get to grapple with light blasters so they can compete with family and friends while joining in the story.

The Spectra XD Dark Ride replaces the 3D Motion Master ride at the theme park. Karen Crabb, CEO of Rainbow's End, commented just prior to the opening: "We are really excited to be opening the Spectra XD Dark Ride in time for the July school holidays. It has been a massive team effort to complete the installation and theming. Kiwis are incredibly creative and resourceful and this is a great example of how we can pull together to create an entertainment offering that rivals our international counterparts."

Ernest Yale, Triotech's founder and CEO said: "We are happy to bring Triotech's award-winning attractions to Rainbow's End. The one thing about the XD Dark Ride is that guests always come out with a smile! It appeals to everyone, it's immersive, it's interactive, they play, they compete, they are part of the action."

India to become home to religious theme park

A NEW theme park is coming to the ancient Indian city of Haridwar. The attraction site will have a religious theme, based on 52 Shakti Peethas, the notable shrines and pilgrimage destinations of the goddess-focused Hindu tradition known as Shaktism.

The park is part of the Indian government's plan to create new tourist destinations in 13 different districts in the Uttarakhand state. The religious park will span across 10 hectares of land not far from the Shri Daksheshwar Mahadev temple in Kankhal.

Haridwar C Ravi Shankar, district magistrate, provided additional information about the project, stating: "Basic infrastructure facilities, amenities and the development of nearby tourist and religious places of importance will also be done under this project. At the chosen site, a grand religious theme park featuring all the revered 52 Shakti Peethas will be featured, which will be one of its kind."



Nijigen no Mori theme park opens Godzilla Museum

NIJIGEN no Mori theme park, the anime-themed attractions park on Awaji Island in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, is opening its Godzilla Museum ahead of the site's Godzilla expansion.

In 2019, Nijigen no Mori announced a new Godzilla-themed area, featuring a huge Godzilla model. At 20m high, 25m wide and 55m long, the replica is described as the "world's largest life-size Godzilla."

The park has now announced it has opened the Godzilla Museum ahead of the opening of the rest of the themed area. The museum features dioramas of different scenes from the Godzilla films. Its rooms will be filled with over 80 Godzilla figures, as well as props used in the films and prototype models of the different monsters. The museum is accompanied by a gift shop selling Godzilla merchandise and a restaurant serving speciality Godzilla dishes.

The advanced opening of the museum, gift shop and restaurant was due to end on August 31, with the facilities then remaining closed until the rest of the Godzilla area opens in full in the near future.



Universal Studios Singapore utilises facial recognition scanners at RWS

UNIVERSAL Studios Singapore is now using facial recognition scanners when guests enter the theme park at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS). The move is to enable "more efficient and seamless" entry to the park.

Season and annual ticket holders no longer require physical tickets to gain entry to the site. Day pass visitors still require passes but are able to exit the park and re-enter with facial recognition.

RWS describes facial recognition as being an "essential" part of admission to improve operational safety and security. The theme park operator also said it was fully committed to protecting the personal data and privacy of visitors.

In a statement, RWS commented: "Facial recognition provides contactless verification of tickets and ticket holders, enabling our customers to enjoy our park experience in a more efficient and seamless manner."



ASIA ATTRACTIONS 游乐界



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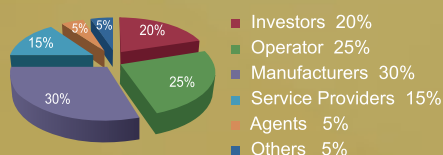


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OCT's Happy South Island project to go ahead

OVERSEAS Chinese Town Enterprises' (OCT) Happy South Island project has been officially signed off and given the go ahead. Happy South Island is being built in Pingtan, Fujian province. It will be the first ever large-scale cultural and tourism complex developed by OCT in the province.

The development has a total investment of approximately CNY10 billion (\$1.45 billion). It will be an updated version of OCT's Happy Coast Park, a wetland park, science and technology park, with a creative zone, carnival area, cultural area, food zone, a hotel complex and other facilities.

The theme of the project will be centred on wind, stone, water and fire. The site will integrate coastal tourism with scientific and technological creativity, ecological health care, urban entertainment, cultural performances and much more. The park will also embed Taiwanese elements into its theme, to help broaden its appeal to tourists.

OCT's Happy South Island project is due to partially open within three years of construction starting.



Construction begins on Ruzhou Hot Spring Lewa City

THE first phase of Ruzhou Hot Spring Lewa City in the Henan Province, China, is now underway. The project has a total investment of CNY12 billion (approx. US\$1.715billion).

The site extends over an area of around 195 hectares and will feature Hot Spring World, an arts city and a five-star hotel. The performing arts city combines a number of themes, including special effect performances, live outdoor performances and an indoor, multi-dimensional compound.

Hot Spring World is an indoor hot spring venue, featuring a lazy river, children's water playing site, a large waterslide, artificial tsunami waves, beach volleyball and more.



ProSlide launches new FlyingSAUCER at OCT Nanjing

WATERPARK specialist ProSlide has launched the first FlyingSAUCER ride in China. The top ProSlide ride is a key feature of the newly opened OCT Nanjing waterpark, which features a total of four of the company's attractions.

ProSlide has collaborated with OCT (Overseas Chinese Town Enterprises) on a number of projects in recent years. One project was the popular OCT Playa Maya Waterpark. Others have included the OCT Chongqing Water Theme Park and the recently opened OCT Xiangyang.

Nik Paas, vice-president of sales for Asia-Pacific at ProSlide, shared his excitement of being involved in developing the attraction at the new OCT Nanjing waterpark, saying: "The FlyingSAUCER is one of the most unique attractions in waterparks today with an iconic visual design inspired by ProSlide's skiing heritage. It will be combined with ProSlide's world-renowned MAMMOTH family raft ride to create a one-of-a-kind complex for China.

"Combining these two distinctive ProSlide rides will give OCT Nanjing's guests the opportunity to feel like World Cup ski racers as they accelerate into a high-speed turn with their friends and family, making for an incredibly memorable experience," Paas added.

Main structure of first phase of Universal Beijing completed



THE principle structure of the first phase of the construction of Universal Beijing theme park is now complete and the installation and commissioning of rides and performance equipment is underway.

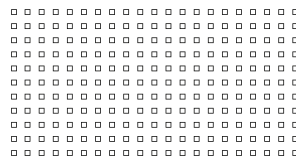
Universal Beijing theme park is located in the Tongzhou Cultural Tourism Zone in Beijing and the first phase of the resort is due to open in 2021. The venue extends over an area of 100.61 hectares and is made up of seven themed areas, including Hollywood Boulevard and an energy centre.

The first phase of the resort also features the Universal Studios Hotel, the Nokin Resort Hotel, the Beijing Universal City Boulevard and a car parking building.



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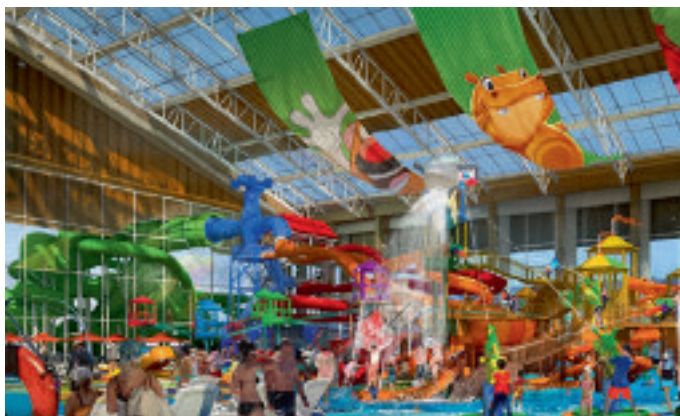


Image courtesy Imagine Resorts and Hotels

Imagine Hospitality's themed waterpark set for Missouri

IMAGINE Hospitality, specialists in hospitality and management, has announced the destination of its long-awaited family attraction site with themed waterpark as Hollister, Missouri.

The 575,000sq. m resort will extend over 68 acres and will be home to a wealth of attractions and entertainment facilities, as well as leading media brands. A 100,000sq.ft indoor themed waterpark will be a main feature of the site.

Guests will be able to dine in six to eight themed restaurants and dining experiences. There will be a 40,000sq.ft family entertainment space, 10,000sq.ft of retail space, adult spas, children's spas and 450 guest rooms and cabins. The project has an investment of \$300m and is expected to create more than 450 jobs.

Bruce Neviasser, CEO of Imagine Resorts, commented: "We're so pleased to bring the world's first of these family-friendly, branded destination resorts to the vibrant vacation area of Hollister and Branson.

"This resort will be an exciting addition to the area and we look forward to being an active member of the business community. In short, we're thrilled to be welcomed into the region's tourism family."

The grand opening of the Imagine Resorts' Hollister destination is due to take place in 2023.



Polin Waterparks wins its first ever virtual award

POLIN Waterparks, a world leader in the design, engineering, manufacturing and installation of waterparks and water play attractions, is celebrating its first ever virtual award.

The honour was made in recognition of Polin Waterparks' exceptional virtual booth design and digital content at the IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia. The immersive three-day event gave attendees the chance to visit a virtual trade show floor and network with colleagues and professionals in digital lounges.

During IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia, attendees voted for virtual booth innovations. The awards fell into three categories – Best Booth Downloads, Best Booth Videos and Most Engaging Chatroom. Polin Waterparks was given the accolade of Best Booth Downloads.

Sohret Pakis, director of marketing and communications at Polin, commented on the company receiving its first ever virtual award. "Our vision as one of the leading companies in our industry is to serve our industry and stay connected. During these unprecedented times, IAAPA Virtual Expo has been a wonderful opportunity to stay connected. Just as importantly as fulfilling business commitments, we stayed connected thanks to this first ever virtual expo of our industry.

"Together with our attractions community, we revolutionised how we network, how we work and how we serve our community. As the Polin team, we love what we do and we believe that our industry brings happiness to our world. It's an honour to be recognised for our efforts by this award. And congratulations to all winners and to all who have been a part of this first virtual expo of IAAPA."



World's first Orbiter water slide debuts at Adventure Bay, China

THE world's first Orbiter water slide has opened, debuting at the OCT Group's Adventure Bay waterpark in Xiangyang, China.

When developing the new waterpark, OCT Group collaborated with waterpark attraction specialists WhiteWater, which provided a number of rides and attractions for the site.

Adventure Bay opened this summer and guests have been enjoying a range of WhiteWater's most popular attractions, including a FusionFortress 10, Double Wavepool, Extreme River and a number of waterslides, including Dueling Master Blasters, AquarSphere + Python Fusion and the world first Orbiter.

Li Xu, manager director of Adventure Bay, commented on the opening of the Orbiter waterslide, saying: "We are delighted that the world's first Orbiter was launched at Adventure Bay, where we have called it Turbo Shuttle. Our guests love it. It's exciting, fresh and fun and it's an unprecedented experience to ride on a raft inside it.

"The guests queuing in line are even more eager to try it when hearing the screams of the riders. Although the park is recently opened, Turbo Shuttle has become one of the stars of the entire waterpark," Li Xu added.





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Green light given for £25m wave park in Birmingham

OFFICIALS at North Warwickshire Borough Council in the UK have given the green light for a wave park to be built near Birmingham, having voted unanimously in favour of the project.

Known as Emerge Surf Birmingham, the £25m wave park will be located in Coleshill, seven miles to the east of Birmingham city centre. The park will feature a 5.4 acre Wavegarden Cove surf lagoon, a surf school, outdoor heated swimming pool, a surf shop, multi-purpose fitness studio and a perimeter track for Onewheel electric skateboards.

The surf lagoon will be powered by Wavegarden's Cove technology. There will also be a children's play area at the park and a physio and massage room.

Steve Price, founder and CEO of Emerge Surf, said: "Our aim with Emerge Surf is to bring a slice of the ocean to Birmingham, creating a haven for landlocked surfers and those wanting to try the sport for the first time. I'm thrilled to see such resounding backing from North Warwickshire Borough Council, recognising our vision and being minded to support the project.

"We're excited to enter the next phase in our plan to deliver a wave park that will be a huge asset to the region and its already renowned visitor economy. It will provide a world-class experience for surfers of all levels, delivering a positive social impact while supporting mental and physical wellbeing. This is alongside creating new jobs, boosting tourism and elevating the region's reputation as a sport and leisure destination," Price added.

The facility is expected to attract around 250,000 visitors a year and will create 100 full-time jobs.

ProSlide announces innovative Cheetah Chase water coaster at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari

PROSLIDE, a leader in developing pioneering waterpark rides and attractions, has announced the opening of a ground-breaking new water ride at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari in Santa Claus, Indiana.

The new water ride features a head-to-head duelling zone and is powered by water propulsion. Guests are propelled up a steep slope across the surface at speeds up to 30ft per second. Sections of the flume are open, enabling riders to see and hear one another as they race.

Commenting on the attraction, Ray Smegal, CCO of ProSlide, said: "Cheetah Chase is something that's really special and unique. The

combination of pure water propulsion that launches riders from a flat start and the innovative duelling experience truly makes it something the world hasn't seen before."

"Right from the beginning, riders are going to have a true water coaster racing experience that's unmatched in the water ride industry. The intensity of the race and that feeling of fierce competition starts from the beginning of the ride and doesn't let up until the very end," Smegal added.

The ride is the twenty seventh ProSlide attraction to be installed at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari.



Roseland Waterpark to remain shut for 2020 season

ROSELAND Waterpark in the Finger Lakes region of Upstate New York has announced it will not reopen this season.

In a statement, the operators of the park said reopening this summer or autumn was not feasible and the site was to remain closed for the 2020 season.

Dan Fuller, Roseland Waterpark's general manager, said: "We understand that we are all living in a difficult time and that tough decisions have to be made. The communication that Roseland Waterpark has received from the State of New York is that the park will remain closed until the governor rescinds the Executive Order pertaining to amusement parks and waterparks.

"With limited guidance and uncertainty surrounding the date the Executive Order will be rescinded, Roseland Waterpark has decided that operating this summer is not feasible," Fuller added.

Season passes for 2020 will be rolled over to 2021, officials have confirmed.



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Adapting an attraction venue in the face of 'covid-19'

UK-based RMA Themed Attractions has worked with a variety of venues over many years, creating a wide range of exceptional and hugely successful attractions. Recently one of those clients, Cadbury World near Birmingham, England, sought help, advice and solutions from the company to allow it to re-open during the current coronavirus pandemic. RMA founder and managing director Nigel Knight reveals to *InterPark* the processes they employed to achieve this and the solutions they came up with

SO, I find that as a guy, I can multi-task! I know this because when I have to problem-solve or come up with a brand new concept or design, I struggle if I sit staring at a blank screen or piece of paper. However, the second I start working, physically building things with my hands, the ideas and solutions start flooding in. It's almost as if the thought processes required of my build-brain to motivate my hands to do the correct tasks stimulate my design-brain as a result.

The reason I mention this is covid-19. I refuse to give it an upper-case start as I really don't think it deserves one! It's just done too much damage and destroyed too many livelihoods to warrant a capital letter.

Two months into lockdown and I was already having numerous phone calls with a number of our clients simply discussing, in open forum, possible options and processes that may provide ways to allow them to re-open to the public. I have lost count of the hours spent during lockdown discussing screens, buttons, routes, seating, shows, tracks, cars, etc., with our beloved and seriously suffering clients. But, it really was a case of the blind leading the blind, as none of us had a clue how to get around a lot of the issues that were manifesting at the time. At that point, no guidelines had been issued nor had a prospective date for re-opening, but we all knew that we had to at least begin talking about solutions in preparation for when better news was broadcast.

Going back to my multi-tasking point earlier, I was staining the outside door to my workshop one day in May (I think). It was a lovely bright, warm, sunny day and I was staining the inside in the relative gloom as I hadn't fitted the lighting yet and received a call from Gerrard Baldwin, general manager at the UK attraction Cadbury World.

Now, I've known Gerrard for as long as RMA have been going, so 26 years or more. We are of the same age and have always been able to talk openly about pretty much anything that crops up. As a result, we had a very long call chewing the cud and going through every area of the attraction with a view to making it covid safe. That call was so long, I managed to get two coats of stain on the door even allowing for the drying time in between! The outcome of the call was a possible way forward for Cadbury World to open again. All I had to do was go back to the office, unfurlough some of the team and get designing.

We had decided on a multi-faceted attack approach. Cadbury World is not the easiest attraction to make covid safe. Some attractions are entirely external, some are ride-based or dark-ride-based, some are large spaces or auditorium-based. Cadbury World is a mix of almost all genre's merged into one space, so what may provide a covid safe environment in one area will not work in the next.

The general thinking at the time was to erect screens everywhere to reduce the spread of airborne particles between visitors. This is fine for general queueing areas, but quite incongruous in heavily themed areas. We thought long and hard about these screens, but the outcome was always the same. In our view, the screens must be themed to blend in with the attraction or interactive they are placed in. We believed that if they were made to look like they were part of the original design and functionality of the area or interactive, they would not be perceived as covid screens, but simply part of the theming.

Visitors are scared. They are frightened of covid-19 and if they are to try to return to some form of normality, bite the bullet and head to an attraction for the day, the last thing they want to see are tall white clinical screening panels everywhere. It just brings back the anxiety and destroys the day. So, we themed the screens. Curved them, added graphics and mounted them within beautifully designed and built bespoke stainless-steel pillars. Yes, it is a more expensive solution, but we figured if we built it to last and built it to blend-in and look great, it could and should remain post-covid. Thankfully, the client agreed so that's the way we moved forward with the design process. The build process, however, was a little more challenging.

I'd sent all the acrylic screen files to our laser-cutting friends to fabricate. The stainless-steel items were lovingly produced by Minster Engineering in York. Cut-Laser-Cut, who fabricate all our acrylics, called me with a minor problem. "One thing to bear in mind Nigel. There is currently a world shortage of clear acrylic!" Great! Plan A with the nice clear portals would need to go and make way for plan B! Plan B was to build it out of "Cadbury" purple rather than clear.

Another call from the laser-cutters. "The purple acrylic you want only comes in 3mm and 5mm thick panels!" We needed a minimum of 8mm panel thickness to ensure the integrity of the design so asked for two sheets to be bonded together? The answer, "Well, yes we could have sheets bonded, but that's a very expensive process." By this time, we had formally provided Cadbury World with a full and detailed quotation for the works and if there is one thing I won't do, or have ever done, it is to go back to the client, cap-in-hand, for more money. So we swallowed that one and pushed the button for production to commence.

The screens underway, we had to consider ways of stopping the transmission of the virus via touch. There are a lot of interactive elements throughout the route



at Cadbury World. Touch screens, push-buttons, levers, knobs, plungers – you name it, it's almost certainly there somewhere. We knew we could not remove all touch elements, but we could certainly reduce these to levels that staff and visitors could then manage with other activities and techniques.

The first stage of the visitor experience at Cadbury World is a dark walk through a jungle area. Just recently, we had installed a number of touchscreen interactives that allowed visitors to play games that imparted a large section of the overall narrative of the area. They were very popular and the learning experience an invaluable part of the core story, so to just shut them down would be a major loss. We decided that rather than simply disable the screens, we would re-programme them to run each game as an animation. This way, the narrative was still in-place and robust, but physical contact was reduced to zero. Heritage Interactive, the company we worked with to produce the original game software, was drafted back in to help us with the animations and they did a splendid job.

Most of the interactives requiring button presses were dealt with in a different way. I did mention that our approach was multi-faceted didn't I? Buttons must surely be considered by the covid virus as perfect transmission devices. Cast your mind back to the old days in the village Post Office where the lady used to dab a postage stamp onto a permanently wet square sponge! Well, buttons are a bit like that wet sponge, just waiting for the next finger to make contact in order to pass on the virus. They had to go!

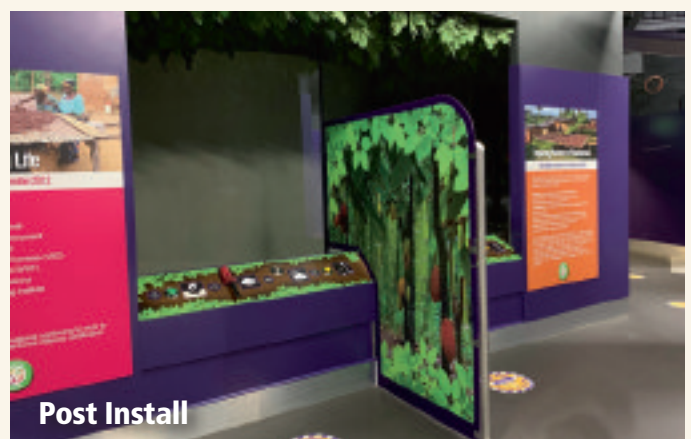
We designed and programmed miniature show control systems for each interactive that did all the button pushing on the visitors' behalf. Not perfect I admit. Visitors, especially kids, love pushing buttons and interacting with things, but it was better to at least have the interactives working and displaying their content than not at all.

Controlling the flow and grouping of visitors was the next area to consider. There are a number of areas throughout the attraction where narrow pathways open out onto larger pooling spaces, generally adjacent to important tableaux's or scenes. In the good old days, it was perceived as a good thing to mass people together to enjoy a shared experience. Sadly, at the moment, that is not the case. Regardless, then, of the importance of those scenes to the overall narrative, the pooling of people had to be reduced to acceptable social distancing guideline levels, so we added additional themed walls and sight-line blockers to control the movement and positioning of visitors.

Why themed walls rather than off-the-shelf screens? Well, last time I checked, the Aztecs were still to have invented clinical steel and Perspex screens at the time they met with Hernandez Cortéz around 1520, so, in order to continue to suspend disbelief and ensure our paying visitors were still getting their bang-for-buck, the walls and pillars had to be themed and merge perfectly with the surrounding sets. Once again, the final result had to look as if it had been there all along and not dropped-in post covid-19. These walls have been designed to be removable post pandemic with little "making good" required. If and when they finally do come out is very debatable at the moment, so they too have been built in our normal rugged style and built to last.

With the buttons, levers and touchscreens disabled and re-programmed, the visitor flows re-routed and reduced and the screens (themed) installed, it was early July and time to open again to the public. But a week or so after opening and another call from Gerrard: "Nigel, we have a problem!"

The one thing we had not considered, bearing in mind this was all very new territory for us all, was the effect social distancing would have on visitor throughput. It was



disastrous. An attraction that could easily handle 3,000 visitors a day was struggling to process 750! We had to come up with a solution and quickly.

The main constrictions were the two auditorium shows, Cadbury Story and Making Chocolate. Both were fully seated, multi-sensory, multi-media shows and both were around six to seven minutes long. Each auditorium space could seat at least 80 people under normal circumstances operating on a 10 minute cycle, but with social distancing set at 2m, in conjunction with the added time taken to get grouped family members together and away from other groups or “bubbles,” it meant that the numbers were hellishly low.

We spent days trying to come up with alternative seating solutions, some with screens, others with differing spacings and each time we ran it past Cadbury World’s operational staff, they could point out why each one would not work. This may sound the most ineffective and inefficient way to design things, but while Cadbury World operating staff were not designers, we were far from being experts in covid-19 based visitor psychology, which Cadbury World operational staff now were. So, we worked together and came to a single focused agreement that – what is already there, seating-wise, would do the job! But we needed to shorten the shows in order to push up the throughput!

Easier said than done, as the old adage goes. These shows cover two of the most important narratives of the whole experience – the history of the company and how the company makes its famous chocolate. Neither of the shows had excess baggage. Neither were plumped-up with long musical interjections or extruded effects. In fact, when we produced the original shows, we struggled to get it down to the current durations, so it was going to be a difficult task.

They were also going to need to be produced by way of editing only rather than new productions and shoots. I’m sure Gerrard won’t mind me saying this, as we are all in the same boat at the moment, but there were limited funds available and so we had to come up with production solutions that could be done almost on a shoestring.

We are also very mindful of the visitors’ perceived value for money, as was Gerrard. It’s all well and good cutting out half a show, but that’s also half the narrative on the cutting room floor. So with that in mind, we carefully read and re-read the scripts, removing sections that either subtly repeated themselves or were dutifully covered at least once in other areas of the overall experience. We then had to re-read each character section of the script working out where cuts could be made.

Cutting one video can be quite easy, but the Cadbury Story production uses three main screens, a BSL screen for signing and a video talking head, all synchronised together. Making a cut at 3:23:12 might make sense on one character’ video, but that cut will be half-way through a section of dialogue on another. It’s a long job and one we are still in the process of completing, but I have put a rough multi-screen test edit together and so far, we’re looking good.

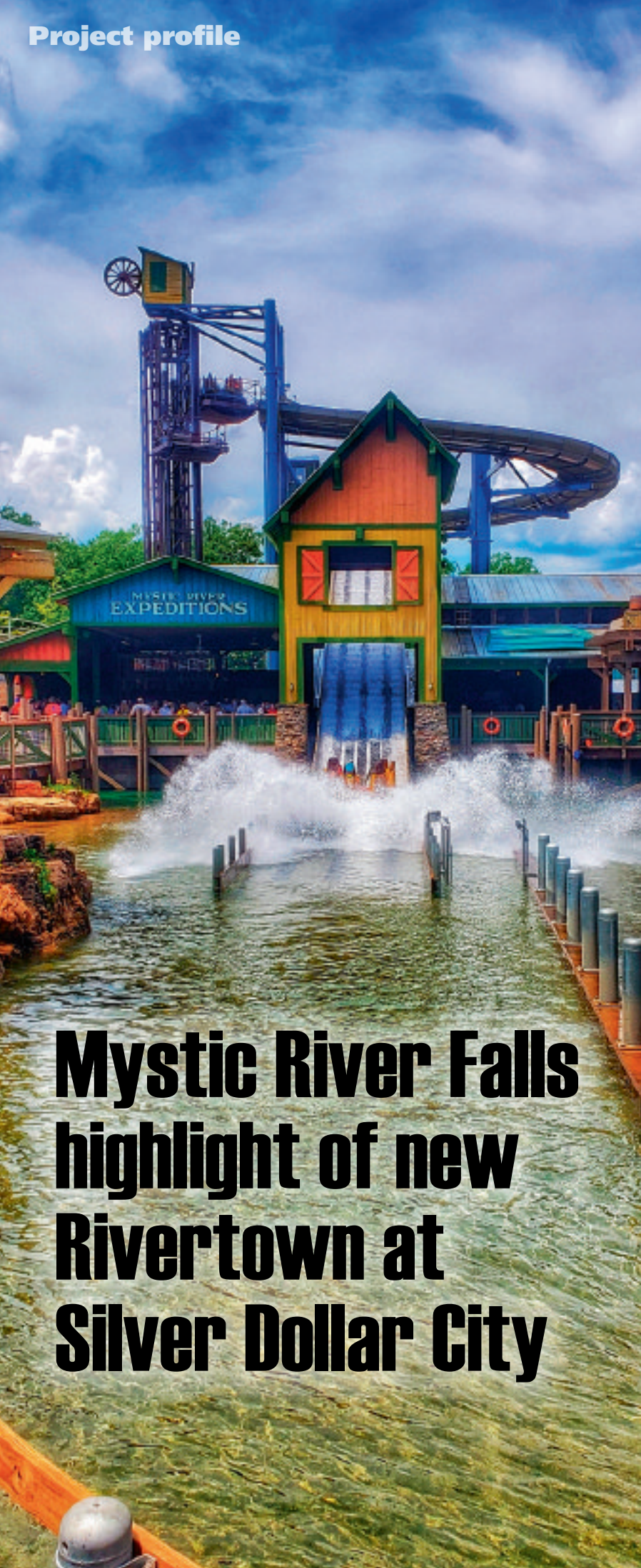
We have calculated that with the seating changes, shortened productions and expert handling of the visitors by Cadbury World’s now very adept operational staff, we should increase the visitor throughput by nearly three-fold. I think we are all still learning, but what other choices are out there?

We recently sent out 250 leaflets with a single main strap-line offer, “We are here to help!” I don’t think we can do much more than that at the moment. And we stand by that offer to anyone out there that needs help.

www.rma-themedattractions.co.uk

All images courtesy RMA Themed Attractions





Mystic River Falls highlight of new Rivertown at Silver Dollar City

SILVER Dollar City in Branson, Missouri, US, has marked its 60th anniversary year in style with the opening of the spectacular Mystic River Falls, a \$23m investment which features the tallest drop on a water raft ride in the western hemisphere.

Incorporating a one-of-a-kind rotating, four-platform, eight storey lift and featuring winding, roaring rapids set in an authentic Ozarks mountainous river theme, the attraction culminates in a waterfall drop that sends riders down more than four storeys of rafting family fun.

Mystic River Falls is the focus of an all-new area called Rivertown that includes the new expansive, \$4m Rivertown Smokehouse, offering an array of meats smoked on-site. This is the largest restaurant ever constructed in the park's history, picturesquely situated along the banks of the new ride. Across the way is a new cinnamon bread bakery, featuring bakers in full view to guests as they create legendary specialties.

Mystic River Falls is themed to the history and legend of the great Marvel Cave, which was the catalyst for Silver Dollar City six decades ago. It is the highlight of Rivertown, where 1880s townsfolk are caught up on a high-spirited celebration, representing the park's diamond jubilee. The attraction calls upon the rich history of the Marvel Cave, intermingling fact and fiction, legend and lore. An underground body of water that seems to come from and go nowhere, the Mystic River truly appears on the park's historical maps and to this day flows in Marvel Cave.

For the new ride, guests are transported back to the 1880s in a storyline that revolves around the historically-based fictional character Pearl Brazen, an intrepid explorer who's eager to take them on a bold quest to find the headwaters of the Mystic River. Riders splash through a nearly half mile (2,100ft) scenic journey on a more than five minute adventure. On arrival at the base of the 82ft high lift tower, the ride boats move onto a conveyor and then onto the lift which take riders in the open air to the top of the tower, rotating as they ascend. The rafts then connect to an elevated river channel suspended 66ft in the air before travelling down 180ft of channel.

Designed and constructed by Silver Dollar City in partnership with Ride Engineers Switzerland (R.E.S.), Barr Engineering, Novaplast (the boats) and Herschend Family Entertainment Corporate Development, the attraction features 18, eight-person rafts, while the rotating elevator has four platforms and is the only one of its kind in the world. It allows for scenic views, increased ride capacity and less ride wait time. Guests must be 55 inches to ride



unaccompanied or between 40 inches and 55 inches to ride under supervision.

"For 60 years, Silver Dollar City has been building and growing," Brad Thomas, president of Silver Dollar City Attractions, told *InterPark*. "Every ride, every attraction, every festival has been created based upon feedback from our guests. Rivertown is a culmination of years of guest feedback. Mystic River Falls is packed with unique thrills that the family can enjoy together. The only place on the planet to experience this ride is right here at Silver Dollar City.

"Now add in the new Smokehouse with 400 seats overlooking the banks for the roaring river, slow cooked meats, awesome sides and the unbelievable bread pudding made with our very own cinnamon bread! And finally, our all new cinnamon bread bakery bakes hundreds of loaves of fresh bread throughout the day. The culmination of all of this truly takes Silver Dollar City to a different level of experience for families and positions us for growth in the

years to come, as we continue to draw families from Dallas to Chicago."

"Rivertown brings a fresh, new look to a part of the park that was already immensely popular, with a new area in the park to enjoy a record-breaking ride, fresh-smoked barbeque, delicious cinnamon bread and other desserts, along with live music, all in one location," added Dalton Fischer, senior publicist for Silver Dollar City Attractions. "The biggest design challenge with this ride was the creation of and decision to use the ride's four platform elevator system. This eight storey rotating lift is truly the only one of its kind on the planet. The elevator allowed us to achieve the height we wanted without sacrificing real estate. The entirety of the Lost River of the Ozarks water rafting ride and Ribhouse restaurant were removed to make way for the new area."

And Lisa B. Rau, director of publicity and public relations at Silver Dollar City Attractions, added: "Mystic River Falls is truly considered an engineering marvel in the global



attractions industry. The length and elevation of the channel, coupled with the Ozarks river theming really puts this water ride on a shelf all its own.

Lots of parks build rides – but we always set out to do the best ride presentation we can. You look at famed coasters like Outlaw Run and Time Traveller which are both leaders in the industry and now we add Mystic River Falls to the top tier list and Silver Dollar City has quite a line-up of legendary attractions.”

On behalf of R.E.S., technical director Roman Rothe commented: “The vertical lift is a special driving experience. The passengers are gently transported up on platforms and also turned by 180 degrees, while they have a great view of the facility and the park. The view is not obstructed by any of the steel structure. Another thing to remember is KIS (Keep it Simple). The lifting system is absolutely economic in terms of power consumption and is unique in the USA.

“With the four platforms it allows us to achieve high capacity without stressing the materials. The passengers

load safely and the boat design with handrail and flap provides riders with a safe ascent. It goes without saying that all movement sequences are double-checked and secured using the latest security monitoring technology. For this purpose, safety control systems from the market leaders in the USA were used.

“The slim tower allows different decorative structures to be used due to its construction,” Rothe continued. “For visitors to the park, there is always something in motion on the tower, regardless of whether a boat goes to the lift or a boat goes out at the top. The simple system and optically slim tower with decor is a landmark for the park, while a big advantage is being able to raise the tower without pushing the drive system to the limit. In combination with the sliding channel on the top, the system is absolutely unique for the USA.

“Additionally, the process of getting the rafts on and off the tower is very smooth and the good work together with the customer and other partners helped a lot with the success of the project. For us, it’s nice when passengers get off happy and the customer is satisfied.”





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Sailing the seas of uncertainty towards a new dawn

By Louis Alfieri, principal and chief creative officer, Raven Sun Creative

WHEREVER you are in the world I wish every one of you, your families, teams and communities health, happiness, enough and continued success when this pandemic passes.

We are all doing our best in hope of preparing for whatever happens next. When the dust settles, we'll still be here and hope you will too.

Thank you for doing the best you can in these times. We are all sailing the seas of uncertainty together. While we are all facing challenges, we are also being given remarkable opportunities to reconnect with our minds, thoughts, families and the world around us. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to assess our impact on one another, our community, the world and the generations following. What do we want to say to our families and co-workers? What do we want to do with the rest of our life? What is our legacy?

Most of us are too young to have experienced a catastrophe like the world wars, the Great Depression, the 1918 flu pandemic or the plague. I take solace knowing we are here as a result of the determination of those who came before us, whose air and land we still share and that humanity will prevail.

Many of us in LBE have the opportunity to travel and work all over the planet. It changes the way we look at the world and the passage of time, affording us a larger perspective. As we fly into cities all over the world – Rome, Beijing, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Lagos, Tokyo, New York – we can imagine ourselves at the centre of time. Looking out the airplane window, we see evidence of everything humanity has done up until this point in time. Every building, every road, every

brick, wire, bolt and light bulb was put there by human hand.

It is testament to what we can achieve and a stirring reminder of what needs to be done. The global infrastructure needs to be remade. We stand on the threshold of a fourth industrial revolution and a new era of sustainable human progress. This is even more important looking at the impending financial crisis that will come as a result of the coronavirus.

The exponential growth of technology – digitalisation, artificial intelligence, VR/AR/MR and changes in in-home entertainment – are certain to have huge implications for the destinations industry. Many businesses will need to re-evaluate their value propositions and evolve to maintain their relevance. Now is the time for LBE to lean into the future – to lead progress. The world is ripe for our processes and the value we offer.

These challenges offer immense opportunities to convert our knowledge, systems, skills and data into products that can have huge impacts on the world around us, creating new avenues of employment, revenue and profit for those lighting the way forward.

COVID-19 is a great equaliser, affecting every nation and person on earth. This moment also represents a remarkable opportunity for all of us on the earth as brothers and sisters to unite in solving a problem for the benefit of humanity.

If people could take from this event that climate change and the sixth great extinction are the same level of urgency to humanity as the virus is – but not as easy to see – we

could turn tragedy into success. These challenges demand equal calls to action and are opportunities for people to unite in creating new solutions and opportunities. Think of the people we could put to work rebuilding the world with sustainable business solutions. P3 – People - Planet - Profit. It's a win-win outcome!

From the most challenging of circumstances come the greatest opportunities; necessity is the mother of invention. We can light the way to a new future – the time is now.

With that in mind, I want to emphasise: hang in there. Together we can make it through the challenges presented by the virus and economy. Remember those who have faced innumerable odds before us and from whom we have been benefitted by – and to those who will follow us.

While things will be different for some time, we need to keep moving forward. There has never been a more important time for us personally and as an industry. How we treat each other going forward is critical. We need to be open in sharing our questions, concerns, ideas and solutions. We are all in the business of making memories, providing a chance for people to enjoy spending time together. Let's stay focused on that goal.

Carpe Diem! Whatever the future is, that future is up to us. I look forward to doing my best to support and collaborate with every one of you in creating that future together.

We must begin building the future we want to live in today

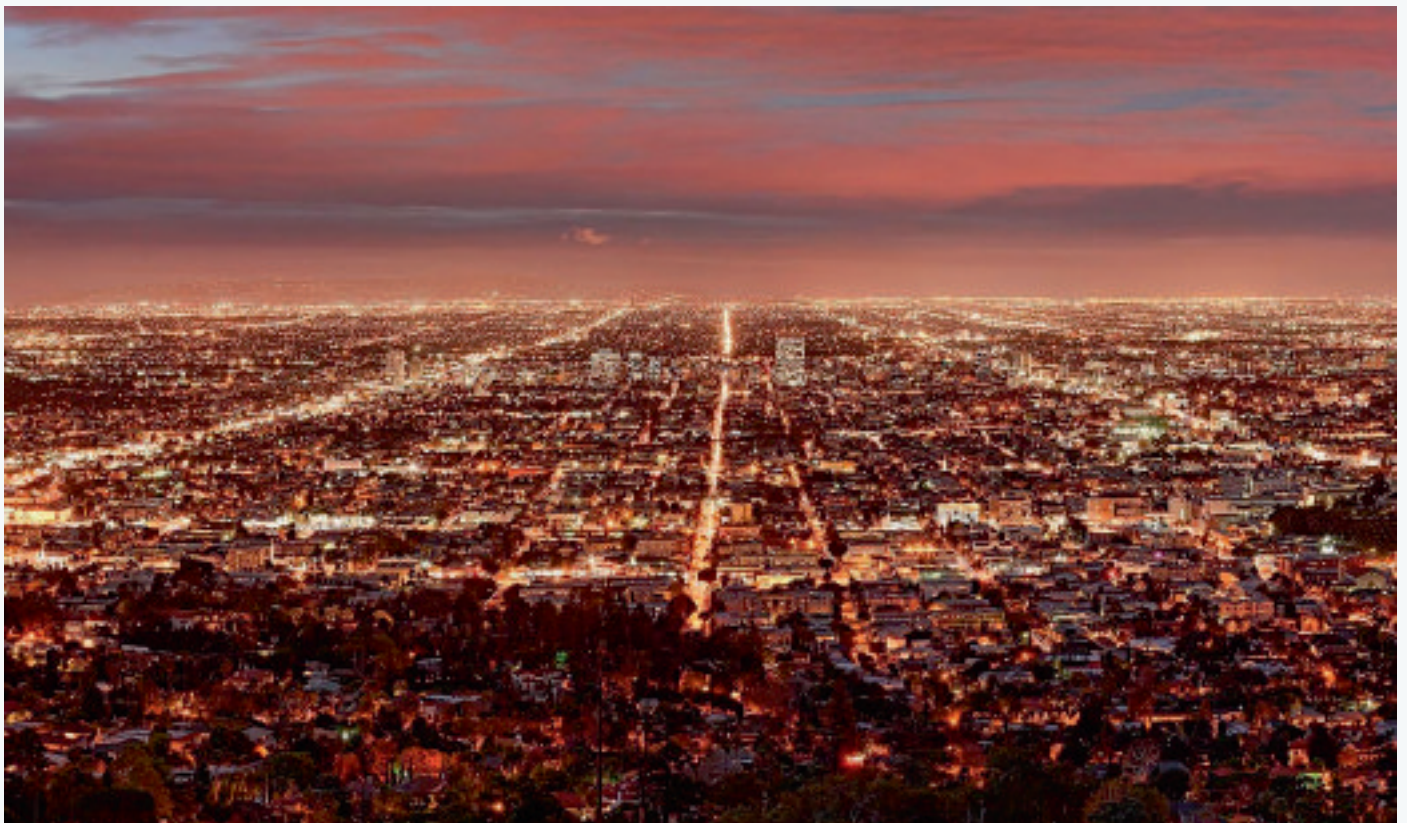
We manifest what others cannot imagine or see. We organise it, we build it, we make it real and we affect the human condition. We work together across cultures, class, politics and governments to unite people in escaping the challenges of their daily lives.

Our collective business model is based on solving problems and developing things others can only imagine. It is up to the entrepreneurs, businesses, local leaders, policy makers, artists and thinkers of the world to unite and drive forward this message in the hope of enacting change on a global scale.

Our industry has the power and financial models to change the message of the global narrative. We can transform lives, economies and ecosystems. We need to move from uncertainty to leading a way forward into the greatest opportunity in history. We can lead a multi-faceted revolution in thinking that governments, business leaders and people can see as beneficial to themselves individually and collectively.

We are the storytellers, innovators, builders, makers and visionaries. We are the inventors of the future. Let's invent a better one together. The time is now.

Together, we are sailing the seas of uncertainty towards a new dawn. Thanks for sharing the journey.





The Bourne Stuntacular scales new heights of excitement and audience engagement at Universal Orlando

By Michael Mascioni

THERE has been an increasing drive to exploit the value of storied entertainment properties in amusement parks by developing attractions based on those properties that are more multi-dimensional and maximize guest engagement in new ways.

A notable example of that trend is the hybrid entertainment approach taken by Universal Orlando with its attraction The Bourne Stuntacular, which officially launched on June 30. The attraction combines live action stunts, “hybrid” storytelling adapted from the films, 3D projection mapping and other special effects to bring to life some of the highlights of the Bourne films and afford new levels of audience participation.

Considerable effort was made to model the attraction and its stunts after the Bourne films. As Deb Buynak, vice-president of Entertainment for Universal Orlando Resort, explained: “We worked very closely with Universal Pictures, the Ludlum Estate and Frank Marshall, executive producer of the Bourne films, to bring the excitement of the Bourne film franchise to our audiences at Universal Orlando. Mr. Marshall was an amazing

mentor to us and really showed us how to navigate the world of Jason Bourne. Regarding the stunt work, Mr. Marshall gave us insights on the fact that Jason Bourne uses any random available object to hide from, distract or even fight the bad guys.

“Jeff Imada, the fight co-ordinator for *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum*, was also onsite to keep our action true to the spirit of the franchise. As in the movies, Jason Bourne races across roof tops, crashes through windows and engages in some pretty bruising fist fights. The challenge was bringing this to life both on-stage and in front of the audience without the help of camera angles, film edits or post production magic. And, on top of that, it was a challenge doing this several times a day, seven days a week.”

Universal Orlando heightened audience involvement in the attraction by allowing guests to help track down Bourne.

“To achieve that, the audience is aided by Julia Stiles, who plays Nicky Parsons in the Bourne movies,” Buynak continued. “She appears as her character in The Bourne

Stuntacular's Pre-Show to help prep our guests for their 'assignment.' Nicky explains that our audience has been approved to participate in a Situation Analysis Team. Using our Enhanced Virtual Surveillance Programme, the team will be able to observe and evaluate the work of director Andrea Dixon as she attempts to locate Jason Bourne.

"Although director Dixon says it is her mission to bring Bourne in alive, Nicky has her doubts and wants this team and our guests to closely monitor the situation that unfolds throughout the show. One interesting casting decision is that due to the number of performances throughout the day requiring multiple casts, one role will be played by both male and female actors, depending on the performance."

3D projection mapping and other technologies and effects contribute significantly to the attraction's high impact. According to Buynak, "our goal in this experience was to immerse our guests in the world of Jason Bourne. This required combining several layers of ground breaking technology, extreme stunts and practical effects. The immense LED screen provides our backdrop, allowing us to travel the globe with the audience in the most amazing way. Moving set pieces and practical effects are positioned in front of the screen. They move in sync with the action on the screen and provide the bridge for our performers to travel to these locations while staying right in front of the audience. The projection mapping is the



final layer that brings the travelling practical sets to life. We can show the impact the action from the performers and LED screen have on these buildings. Smoke, bullet hits and damage from explosions are all evident on the structures as they move about the stage. All of these combined really make for a brand new hybrid approach to storytelling that has never before been seen."

Developing a multi-faceted attraction with so many diverse elements proved a formidable task, as one might expect. As Buynak explained: "One of the main challenges in developing The Bourne Stuntacular was synchronising all the elements for the show when they were being assembled throughout North America. The media used for the screen was being created in Canada while the set pieces were being constructed in California and Pennsylvania. The colours used for the digital version of the Tangier scene with the rooftops had to perfectly match the paint on the moving set pieces. In addition, those set pieces had to be built to accommodate live stunt performers that were blocking chase scenes and fights on mock buildings across the country."



The Bourne Stuntacular

Universal Orlando conducted a soft launch of the attraction in June, which yielded key insights about audience preferences. The park was surprised at many of their reactions. According to Buynak: "We thought they would marvel at the immense LED screen and gasp at the high falls throughout the show. But there is a moment where all the action goes into slow motion and the audiences were bursting into applause during this sequence of the show. We didn't see that coming. It is always fun and special to see what each audience connects with."

Great attention was devoted to maintaining the safety of guests at the attraction "due to measures introduced following the coronavirus pandemic." Buynak stresses that "we strove to open the venue in a very thoughtful manner. We carefully studied and followed the guidelines of the CDC and local health officials. As we've done throughout the Universal Orlando destination, we've implemented new procedures to focus on screening, sanitisation and spacing."

"Of course, all of our guests, cast and crew have their temperature checked before coming into the parks," she went on. "The theatre is cleaned between each show. All guests are required to wear face coverings during the performance and travel parties are seated appropriately to accommodate proper social distancing guidelines. These procedures mean that our show capacity will be limited and wait times may be longer than usual to experience the show."

Buynak said the attraction was geared to a broad audience. According to her, "with the Bourne Stuntacular, we wanted to create a show the whole family could experience together. Regardless of your height, or your fear of heights, you will enjoy this show to the fullest."

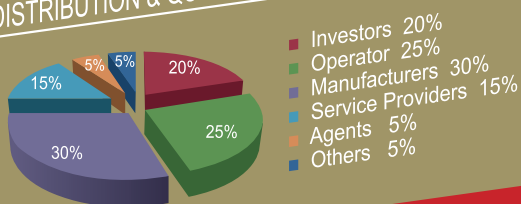
From a broader perspective, Universal Orlando's approach is a key example of the growing trend towards "hybrid immersive entertainment" in location-based entertainment, especially those combining physical and virtual experiences.





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Who are your guests comparing your attraction to?



By Chris Smoje

Image courtesy
Yas Waterworld
Abu Dhabi

HAVE you ever heard, said or felt like saying “customers are so demanding” or “customers have unrealistic expectations?”

It’s definitely something that I hear frequently and I’ve been thinking about it for many years. We would often use the fair and reasonable test in these situations and ask ourselves is it fair that customers are feeling a certain way and are they being reasonable in their demands? When we ask these questions, we often find that most things customers ask of us are fair and definitely reasonable (there are of course always the exceptions). But organisations and attractions that have a strong focus on service will always see things this way.

A good question, however, is to learn what we could be doing better to be on the front foot of our customer requests. Whether we like it or not, a customer that comes into our attraction and “demands” things from us – whether fair or reasonable – is still a “demanding” customer. So it would be good to learn where our customers’ demands are coming from.

We are all customers; in fact many of us are customers before we even go to work in the morning, whether it’s

buying coffee or fuelling up our cars, or if not, we’re likely to be customers after work, picking up things for dinner and so on. The fact is, our customers are not just our customers either; they too visit other places. And in fact, when it comes to visiting attractions, customers can often visit once per year and not regularly like the customers of many other businesses.

So what? They go to a bunch of other non-exciting places between visits right? What’s the big deal? Herein lies the answer to where customers get their demands from. It is an old mentality to think that our competitors are only other attractions nearby. Some people can’t grapple with the idea that our competitors are other attractions both nationally and internationally. But it is an even more challenging thought to accept that our competitors could be any business anywhere in the world. Well okay, that maybe taking it a little too far, so to narrow it down a bit, competitors are any other business anywhere in the world that has better service than your attraction. Now that could be anyone!

At a higher level it is really good to understand this concept, because that keeps us always open to ideas that



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Image courtesy
Silverwood Theme
Park, US

we can use to improve our guest service. But the trick is to look outside of the industry. The attractions industry is really good at benchmarking. It is common to visit another attraction for the day as a guest and suss out what things are like, but that is only useful to a point. We need to get into the habit of also looking outside of our industry (as I write for an industry specific magazine)!

To illustrate this, let me share a quick story. In 2018, my wife and I took a six week holiday to Croatia (my family background is Croatian). It was an amazing experience. We live in Perth, Western Australia, and went to and from Croatia via Singapore Airlines who arguably offer some of the best customer service in the aviation industry. Their service on board is amazing.

But the story relates to the end of my trip. We flew back with Singapore Airlines – once again the service on board was perfect. When we arrived in Australia we entered with our e-passports, so avoided talking to an immigration officer. We had nothing to declare, so avoided talking to both customs and quarantine. We picked our bags up, got the car from the long term car park and were home within half-hour of landing. How good is that!

Image courtesy
Adventure World
Australia



Now here's where the story gets interesting. When we arrived home, we had a "sorry we missed you" delivery slip in our front door. It was around 3pm and we knew we had to go to the shops to get some milk and bread anyway, so we decided to go and collect the parcel from the local post office. Remember, just to reiterate, we still hadn't spoken to another human being since being farewelled by the Singapore Airlines flight attendant at the door of the aircraft. And then came the lady at the post office! I probably shouldn't say any more. The contrast between Singapore Airlines and the post office was astonishing. The worker had been there all day and was annoyed that such a period of time had lapsed to pick the parcel up, as well as it being the afternoon rush with the post office full of people.

To be fair, the service wasn't any better or worse than when I've previously been at the post office, but this time it was a little different because I was comparing the service to Singapore Airlines. And while it isn't necessarily right to compare a post office to a full-service airline, it just happened. Also, I think if the lady at the post office had known that I had just stepped off a Singapore Airlines flight, perhaps she might have been different too. However, people don't often think that way. And it didn't need to have been Singapore Airlines, it could have been another local business with great service that could have created the same perception and outcome.

This is why it is so important that we ask the question, who are your guests comparing your attraction to? Or better yet, where have they been before they have visited us? Because we'll never know the answer to that question all the time, we have to continually look at delivering great service – because we have to! It would be much better to offer such good service and have your guests demand of other businesses the level of service they get from you, than have guests make demands of your service because of other businesses they have been to.

A final word. If you've ever had a guest say "the service at XX is so much better than here," pay attention and see what they're doing differently. This is so much better than the usual gut reaction of "fine then go give them your business!"

Chris Smoje is a customer service expert, an alumni of the Disney Institute with theme park service leadership experience. Chris helps leaders and human resource teams create cultures that serve. For more information visit www.chrissmoje.com



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A visitor's view Efteling, the Netherlands

By David Whitworth



A MIXTURE of emotions are cleverly conjured up as you step foot into the world of mythology that is Efteling theme park in the Netherlands. It is a dreamy land of fantasy not to be missed.

Efteling is one of the Netherlands' most loved parks. Opened on May 31, 1952, Efteling offers a magical theme created over time and based around five differently themed "realms" and enchanting storytelling. A park which started life as a nature haven, it is the largest theme park in the country and attracts in the region of five million visitors annually. Over 120 million people have entered its grounds since it opened its doors back in the 1950s. It is located in the village of Kaatsheuvel to the

south of the country in the province of North Brabant, around a one and a quarter hour drive from the capital city of Amsterdam.

As soon as you see The House of the Five Senses – or the entrance to the amusement park – you realise you're about to transport yourself into a parallel world with its towering and impressive entry area. The magical music that welcomes guests perfectly encompasses this dreamy theme.

Once inside, you quickly immerse yourself into the fantasy world Efteling conveys with its impressive theming and designs throughout the park, using the beautiful pine forest to its advantage – with nature being a key element to the venue.

The park is generally geared up to welcome families with its mix of gentle rides and adrenaline-filled white knuckle roller coasters. For roller coaster enthusiasts, there is a healthy variety of rides to get the heart pumping. The dive coaster Baron 1898 (pictured right) is a must for all thrill-seekers as it hits the spot with a frantic paced ride of drops, loops and corkscrews. It is well worth sampling to experience the fantastic pre-ride queue show too.

De Vliegende Hollander (The Flying Dutchman) is a clever hybrid water coaster with a great blend of water features and a coaster making for a highly entertaining ride. Other notable attractions include Joris en de Draak (George and the Dragon) which was a really great ride too. A duel wooden coaster and a must for all woody fans, it provides a rickety ride that is a hallmark of this type of coaster.

For the whole family, Droomvlucht (Dreamflight) and Symbolica, which opened its doors last year, are a joyous musical and visual mix, transporting guests through different worlds and fairy tales. Visitors can also keep an eye out for the park's cheerful and colourful court jester, Pardoes, who makes appearances throughout the park as its principal mascot.

Efteling of course caters for its younger visitors perfectly and takes them to heart with its beautiful Fairy Tale Forest, a picturesque woodland zone which is home to some colourful characters and stories from fairy tales of yesteryear, such as Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel – depicted from celebrated fairy tale storytellers such as the likes of The Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.

The Dutch park has a really novel way of keeping its cleanliness with various recycle bins dotted around the area in the form of depicted storybook characters getting guests, especially the younger generation, to give them their waste, shouting "paper here," which cleverly encourages the importance of good recycling practice.

At the end of each day, the park has its own water show called Aquanura, which gives the perfect finale to a visit with a spectacular show of water fountains and fire.

On gathering opinions from other guests visiting Efteling, sisters Martine and Nynke De Jong thoroughly enjoyed their day out at the park.

Martine commented: "What I like about the park is that they have a nice balance between the roller coasters and the more gentle attractions and also the fairy tale forests for the kids. There is a good balance between the things that you can see and the things that you can do. I like the fact that it caters for all the family."



And Nynke added: "What I love about Efteling is that they've put so much effort into all the small details – like the looks, stories and even smells! – and that makes you really feel like you're in a different, magical world."

Fans of the park also included Nikki Walraven, who explained: "Efteling is a perfect combination of thrilling rides and magical fairy tales. I loved visiting as a child and I love it still to this day."

That combination of thrilling rides and magical fairy tales stands the park in good stead going forward and one can tell from a visit that it is a forward thinking destination. Another part of its continued development plan came to fruition this year with the opening of the brand new attraction Max & Moritz – a duelling coaster which has replaced a favourite ride for theme park connoisseurs, the Swiss Bob, a traditional Alpine bobsleigh coaster originally constructed in 1985.

Winter Efteling

A theme park which likes to break from the norm, and much in keeping with its forward thinking values, Efteling is an all-year-round entertainment complex with the creation of its Winter Efteling programme. An idea which originated back in 1999 and took off in the 2000s, the park began to fully embrace its Winter Efteling in 2010 when it officially established its winter visiting timetable schedule. The park opened through the wintry months last winter from



November 11 to February 2. Opening times are usually from 11am to 6pm and the park even opens on Christmas Day from 10 am until 8pm. What a way to celebrate and the perfect present to wake up to!

It is a very novel idea as most parks close for the winter period, yet Efteling thrives on doing things differently and successfully stands out from the crowd. For instance, you can enjoy the specially built indoor ice rink of IJspaleis or take flight on cross country skis, where the site of the pedal train The Kinderspoor becomes the ski track named 't Hijgend Hert. From here, you can waltz through the windmills

and enjoy a typically Dutch pastime while at one with the nature of winter. Skis and poles can be picked up for free by its entrance.

Also during the winter months, the attraction Villa Volta has an impressive light show beamed on its façade – adding to the wintry wonder of Efteling through the Christmas festive season and beyond. To keep guests warm, there are various bonfire gatherings where entertainment and snacks are in ready supply. And not surprisingly, there is a fair chance of snowfall during Winter Efteling, which naturally enhances the cold and white theming the park conjures up at this time of the year.

What's the cost?

So how much do visitors to Efteling pay? A general entrance ticket for adults is a respectable €42. However, children aged four and over pay the same, which is expensive for youngsters, although it has to be noted that similar child's price bands apply in most of the larger theme parks. Children under three do go free and there is a €2 discount on all online booking fees except for guests over 60 and disabled visitors, who pay €40. If you are travelling by car, a parking ticket costs €12.50 and a favourably sized meal costs a reasonable €12.50 and €14.50 including a drink. The park itself opens its doors from 10am up until 8pm most days, which extends right up to 11pm on Friday and Saturday evenings.

A tip from our trip would be to visit until the park closes, as the drop off in queuing times for its major rides was evidently clear from 5pm onwards until closure at 8pm.

The verdict

Efteling is a multi-purpose venue offering not just rides but also an impressive 18-hole championship golf course, two hotels, a grand theatre and even its own radio station on site. Interestingly, in 2014, award-winning DJ Tiësto created the Second Efteling Symphony for the park's Aquanura water themed show.

Our opinion from sampling Efteling first hand is that it is a very relaxing and enjoyable park. It was a dreary, rainy day on our visit (as can be seen from the photos), but that did not spoil the trip – it actually added to the enchantment of the park and heightened our experience even more.

It is a dreamy world for all the senses as you immerse yourself into this fabled kingdom. The park perfectly draws you into a land of fascinating fantasy, folklore, fairy tales and fun and its storytelling, theming and entertaining rides, shows and attractions make the Dutch theme park an ideal destination to visit.



Thorsten Backhaus



Thorsten Backhaus,
managing director,
Movie Park Germany

InterPark: Can you provide a brief outline of your time in the attractions industry and the positions you've held?

Thorsten Backhaus: My entry into the leisure industry began in January 2008 in the position of director of finance and IT at Movie Park Germany. The first years were marked by the sale of the park to Parques Reunidos in 2010 and its later integration into the group. The scope of duties grew with the transfer of responsibility for the personnel department up to the general management of Movie Park Germany in October 2014. Since then, the focus has been on the continuous development of the park as a family leisure park.

IP: What is the history of Movie Park Germany? When was it founded and by whom?

TB: Movie Park Germany has a long history, which has been essential for its DNA as a movie and amusement park. Back in 1996, the park was established as Warner Bros. Movie World after a construction phase of two and a half years and promoted under the motto "Hollywood in

Germany." When the park was renamed in 2005 to Movie Park Germany, it still held onto this concept. Since the beginning, it has stood by its USP as Germany's biggest movie and amusement park and has continuously worked on refining this characteristic.

Since 2010, Movie Park Germany has been part of Parques Reunidos, one of the leading global operators of regional leisure parks with a well-diversified portfolio of more than 60 different assets all over the world.

IP: What do you feel are some of the key strengths and USPs that the park has to offer?

TB: The USP Movie Park has to offer is its mixture of theme park and film park. The film topics and the motto "Hollywood in Germany," which are integrated into the park and attractions, are key for Movie Park Germany's identity and self-conception. Therefore, we also count a bunch of licensed attractions to our portfolio that directly transport the visitors into the world of well-known movies and TV series (e.g. Star Trek, PAW Patrol).



In general, Movie Park Germany offers an attraction portfolio for the whole family, which forms the park's key target group. The park has also been named the number one family park in Germany by Welt am Sonntag and received many other awards by renowned magazines over the past few years.

IP: Can you briefly describe the latest developments in the park and what is new for 2020?

TB: Just last year, we opened the new PAW Patrol themed area Adventure Bay at Nickland, where families with children can directly immerse themselves in the world of the popular TV series. We also refurbished our water attraction Bermuda Triangle and reopened it with a new storyline, music and theming as Area 51 – Top Secret. This year, we expanded the PAW Patrol area with a third family attraction. With Skye's High Flyer, our guests can now go on a flight mission in Adventure Bay. We are currently working on a new interactive laser walk-through, which is scheduled for an October opening. Our guests will take on the role as ghost hunters. Equipped with laser weapons they will walk through different scenes and are supposed to free an old town from evil spirits.

IP: Over the years, what has been your most successful attraction in terms of return on investment?

TB: Well, it is difficult to trace the success of growing in visitors and/or revenues by a certain attraction as some more impacts are influencing our business, e.g. marketing activities and weather. However, I think the investment into Star Trek™: Operation Enterprises opened a new chapter for Movie Park in terms of attractiveness for guests, image and reputation, which helped to outline our positioning as a family-friendly park providing an immersive experience.

IP: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what would you say were some of the main trends in the European parks and attractions industry and in the wider global industry too?

TB: After the big hype of VR technology, more parks are looking into guest experiences which are not "hardware-related," especially the digital experience. Virtual Q-lines, food ordering apps as well as waiting time features will help to improve guests' experience and journey in the parks and will add more value to a park visit.

IP: How did you continue to engage with guests during the period of enforced closure prior to opening for this season?

TB: We stayed in close contact with our guests through social media. We kept them updated with the newest developments, gave them backstage insights and uploaded games or riddles revolving around Movie Park Germany to enhance their interaction with each other, too. It was important to us to still let them immerse themselves in the world of theme parks while not being able to visit our park.

IP: Obviously operating Movie Park Germany in 2020 is very different to previous years. What operational changes have you introduced to enable you to open and operate safely for both employees and guests?

TB: The safety and health of our visitors and employees are our top priority. Therefore, we defined detailed hygiene and safety measures with the local authorities to ensure a safe stay at our park. Our employees are increasingly involved in implementing and monitoring the measures. To ensure even greater security, we have hired additional security personnel. Some employees are also on-site as Corona officers to draw attention to the regulations in a more entertaining way. As a result of the situation around Corona, we have also increased security and hygiene measures since the opening of the park. For the additional protection of all guests, all attractions are cleaned at regular intervals – and far more frequently than officially determined. In the park itself, distance markings and information signs have been installed and disinfection facilities for guests and staff have been created.

IP: What are you envisaging the pandemic will do to visitor numbers this year in your park?

TB: Definitely, this year will be significantly impacted by the pandemic as the entire spring season was lost and due to capacity regulations, we are operating on a max of 32 per cent of our usually allowed capacity only. However, we are happy that we have been allowed to open the park since the end of May and are operating the park in as safe an environment as possible, hoping to offer families and children a great variety in these days.

IP: How do you think consumer behaviour will change at parks in view of the pandemic? What are guests saying about park visits?



TB: Most of the feedback we receive is positive and people accept and understand the regulations in place to operate the park. We are selling only online and dated tickets; our visitors need to accept the rules and agree on those. However, some guests have a different view on the actions and regulations we need to follow.

IP: What are some of your plans for the future at Movie Park and will the COVID-19 pandemic impact on these in any way?

TB: Our development plan is currently under review and impacted by the pandemic. Difficult to say if we can follow the path we set at the end of last year. However, we are working on our novelty for 2021 and our 25th anniversary and aim to surprise our guests with a nice gift for next season.

Personally speaking

Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at... do-it-yourself work at home

The most interesting place I've ever been to is... Kruger Resort in South Africa

Family aside, the prized possession I value above all others is... good friends and health

My favourite film is... almost all the James Bond movies

When I'm not working I like to... be with my family

The person/people who has/have influenced me most are... my parents

My favourite musician/band is... Depeche Mode

If I could invite a celebrity to dinner it would be... Sean Connery

To really chill out I... go to the Alps

I really dislike... dishonesty



Soaky Mountain Waterpark, US

AMERICA'S only new waterpark for 2020, Soaky Mountain Waterpark in Sevierville, in the Smoky Mountain region of Tennessee, opened its doors to the public at the end of June.

The 50 acre park has been built by the Wilderness Resorts and Waterparks Group and is located across the street and up the hill from the Sevierville Convention Centre and Wilderness at the Smokies Resort.

Designed and constructed by the Aquatic Development Group (ADG), highlights of the park include the Avalaunch, a first-of-its kind, two-person tube water coaster with three uphill blast zones, four flying saucer features that create a drop-and-dive sensation and one wave curved wall; Soaky Surge, a 35,000sq.ft wavepool capable of generating waves 6ft high; Black Bear Rapids, an adventure river encompassing 24,000 sq.ft; and The Hive, a bee-themed play-and-spray feature with countless hands-on activities for younger children.

In addition to the Avalaunch water coaster, there are other huge slides including two five-person raft rides, Blue Mountain Mayhem, featuring two gravity challenging walls, and Rainbow Revenge, a state-of-the-art waterslide experience that dazzles the senses with translucent lighting

technology and three saucer turns; a tubing tower with five flumes; two high-intensity body slides; and Splash and Furious, a four-lane, head-first mat racing challenge through alternating sections of side by side racing.

Other thrill rides at the park are the Whoop, a trap door, free-fall launch attraction which sees guests plummet down a slide into a runout finish; Holler, on which guests slide out of a start tube into a gentle descent before "dropping off of the face of the Earth" in a "stomach in your throat" experience before a runout finish; and HANG 10ESSEE, a double FlowRider with wave riding action for surfing fans.

Additional family rides include Copperhead Clash, a double flumed tube slide with side-by-side racing sections throughout; Cottonmouth Coils, an enclosed tube slide with translucent lighting effects and three explosion turns; Timber Rattler's Rage, a slow and go one or two-person tube slide which takes guests on a journey through three distinct Tornado funnel sections; Slippery Salamanders, a double-lane inflatable water obstacle course; and Coyote Springs, a 3,800sq.ft flat-water cabana pool with a sun shelf for relaxing poolside in a private cabana or just out of the way of the hustle and bustle of the rest of the park.

For younger guests, in addition to the aforementioned The Hive, there is also Boomers Bay, a children's activity pool area with smaller versions of the adult-size towering slides including Lil' Rattlers and Mini Mayhem.

Another unusual component of the waterpark are some unique food options. Building upon the popularity of food trucks, the park's creators went on a nationwide search to find some noteworthy vehicles – and they found them.

In Montana, they purchased a 1954 AEC (Chassis) Regent III with Park Royal Vehicles Bodywork, which in its day was a double decker bus for the London Transit System. It is now home to Tacolicious, serving up Mexican favourites on the bottom level and offering seating overlooking the park and the Smoky Mountains on the upper level. The vehicle is located next to Soaky Surge. The other truck was purchased in Illinois and is now home to the Rolly Macaroni F&B outlet, which serves up all sorts of mac and cheese with unique twists! It is located by Black Bear Rapids.

Additionally, other F&B offerings are the Wipe Out Bar, the Bee Good Café, the Base Camp Bistro, the Soaky Shake Shoppe and the Overlook Bar which overlooks the

wavepool. For guests seeking some retail therapy, there is the Candy Cabin, the Honeycomb Gifts and Gear outlet and the Mountain Mercantile, for sundries and souvenirs.

Commenting on the opening of the park, general manager Dave Andrews said: "We are so excited to be open to the public! Soaky is such a fun place for families and truly features something for all ages to enjoy, all in a beautiful mountain-modern park setting."

Because of the COVID-19 situation the park's officials have decided to postpone the grand opening celebration to the start of the 2021 season and have only had a soft opening in 2020. According to Andrews: "We want to throw a big celebration to mark the opening of this fabulous waterpark, but for right now, we will have to wait and practice responsible social distancing and other safety precautions outlined in our Safer at Play Programme."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, waterpark officials are strongly encouraging guests to purchase their daily admission tickets in advance at soakymountainwaterpark.com due to restricted capacity levels. Season pass holders are being accommodated. Masks are optional in the park and are not allowed in or on any water attractions.



PARKLIFE

The CDC (Centres for Disease Control) has stated there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread to humans through the use of pools and hot tubs. With proper operation, maintenance and disinfection (e.g. with chlorine or bromine) the virus should be removed or inactivated. The park has also created a Safer at Play safety programme that it is following.

The new waterpark cost nearly \$90m to construct and will have nearly 500 full- and part-time employees. It is anticipated it will draw over 400,000 visitors annually, of which 100,000 will be new visitors to Sevier County. It is also expected to increase the average nightly stays in the region while generating approximately \$400,000 annually in Tourism Development Zone Tax.

ADG's design and build challenge

Wilderness Resorts wanted to build a \$90m, state-of-the-art, 50 acre outdoor "modern-mountain" waterpark featuring the most cutting-edge attractions in the industry.

The Soaky Mountain team originally considered a summer 2021 opening date, but the ADG team knew it could get the park open a season earlier. To do this, ADG

took on the role of designer/builders and construction manager of the project, seeing the project through from concept to construction, meeting the budget and beating their original timeframe.

According to the company, there were several challenges that were faced and overcome throughout the project:

The site/geology: from the entry point to the furthest part of the waterpark, there was 100ft of elevation change and the site was composed primarily of shale rock. ADG's construction team had to blast and move 750,000 yards of earth before work on the park could even begin. A key objective in ADG's design was to preserve and showcase the unique elevation grade as much as possible, creating a unique "modern-mountain" landscape that allowed them to creatively design the amenities and attractions into the elevation versus just flattening it out.

Weather: throughout construction there were 60 days that were completely washed out, meaning construction crews were unable to use heavy machinery for two full months of project construction.

Pandemic: overcoming unknown/unprecedented obstacles of constructing a waterpark during a worldwide pandemic.



The solution

The water rides and attractions at Soaky Mountain feature the latest in ride innovation across all ride categories.

"The exciting thing about the attractions in this park is that most of the rides have innovative combinations of features or are hybrid dual-functioning rides, creating a truly unique and unexpected ride experience," says Jim Dunn, president of Aquatic Development Group.

Beyond the ride mix, the park also features a "mountain modern" design which truly sets it apart from others in the industry. From the design, architecture and buildings to the multitude of unique F&B outlets located throughout the park, this modern flair, combined with a natural mountain vibe, was the perfect showcase for a waterpark situated only a few miles from the Smoky Mountains.

Aquatic Development Group was the designer and builder of all water features in the park, utilising its own WaveTek® wave systems in the wavepool and Tidal River ride. ADG also designed/supplied the dual-Wibit® inflatable water obstacle course, the adult cabana pool and the double FlowRider®. ProSlide developed the innovative slide package for Soaky Mountain which features several industry-first slides that were suitable to be constructed into the topography of the property.

The result

The biggest asset of this project was the ability to get it open a year earlier than the ownership group was aiming for.

"Designing and building a full outdoor waterpark in one year is definitely a challenge," says Dunn, "but with our InDepth planning and design and our in-house project management, manufacturing and construction team, we can start a project by hitting the ground running, making the necessary on-the-spot decisions that will lead to achieving the owner's goals, meeting the budget and getting the park open on time. Getting a waterpark open a season earlier than anticipated results in a significant financial return for the developer and ownership group of the property."

Regardless of the environmental conditions, site complications or unprecedented circumstances, ADG completed Soaky Mountain with a build time of eight months, a feat the company is justifiably proud of.



At a glance

Opened in June 2020

Owned by Wilderness Resorts and Waterparks Group

Designed and constructed by Aquatic Development Group

Slides by ProSlide

Only new waterpark to open in the US this year

\$90m investment

Covers 50 acres

Comprehensive mix of thrill, family and children's attractions

www.SoakyMountainWaterpark.com

Park-demic opportunities

By Dennis Spiegel

Continuing his series of articles on the attractions industry, International Theme Park Services (ITPS) founder and CEO Dennis Spiegel discusses how some parks and attractions are taking the opportunity to analyse their businesses like never before during the forced periods of closure that have come as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

TALKING with my friends and colleagues globally throughout the industry, I have heard just about every horror story a person could think of as we move from day to day through this endless morass of openings, closings, schedule adaptations and continued general loss of revenue. While this has certainly been the most difficult and trying time our attractions industry has ever experienced, I have heard many enlightening stories about attractions undertaking soul-searching examinations and internal scrutiny of their business from top to bottom – and even in some cases lower.

Image courtesy
Beto Carrero
World



A few CEOs have told me they have analysed areas of their business that have never been probed before. I have been told that looking closely at the business side as they have been forced to do will yield excellent cost-cutting savings in future operations. One CEO said, “It is easy to identify what is wrong, but what can we learn from it to ensure we do not go through this again?” We talked about setting up initial “team task forces” during this slower time to identify ways to counter and improve the impactful road blocks that have been encountered. He entrusted the task force to look for the silver linings in the current situation that will make them stronger and generate more revenue. This would include adjusting pricing strategies. Pricing is going to be an absolute bellwether for the next several years and necessary for getting people to return more quickly to parks and attractions.

The same applies to capital expenditures (Cap-X). I have said for decades that our attractions live on repeat visitation and repeat visitation is driven by Cap-X, or new product. Therefore, we may need to reduce capital spending amounts due to the virus, but not entirely cut them out. A gap too long in Cap-X spending will result in less attendance and a longer time to re-build lost attendance.

One thing is for sure. Vendors, manufacturers and suppliers are in the same situation as operators. They are

willing to offer assistance to meet the anticipation of the operators' needs. One major ride designer/manufacturer told me, "The company is ready to negotiate. We are all in this together and, like a roller coaster, we have our drops and we have our ascents as well. Half of a five pound cake is better than all of a one pound cake!"

By taking time during this crazy, worldwide Park-Demic, operators can find "nuggets" of "positive ore." This can be done by asking their teams to pull out the microscopes and sift and analyse obvious areas of their operations. I assure you there are endemic opportunities which will avail themselves that will make our Park-Demic less painful. Glimmers of that silver lining exist; we must judiciously use the downtime we are experiencing to keep searching, keep analysing and keep finding the positive ore.



Dennis Spiegel is founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services (ITPS), based in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. A past chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), he has over 50 years' experience in the theme park and leisure industry. Since its inception in 1983 ITPS has worked on over 500 projects in 50 countries and is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development.

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World news round-up ...

CHINA A co-operation agreement has been signed for the creation of the Hangzhou Bay cultural tourism complex in Ningbo city, Zhejiang province, with a total investment of CNY4bn (\$587m). The project belongs to the Haichang Group. It will feature a further interaction between land life and sea life, ecological exploration, themed tourism consumption, themed holiday resort, scientific studies and supporting business functions. Subject to the world-class standard of design, construction and operation, the park intends to create a top immersive themed leisure destination, as well as to play a complementary role to the Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park. The park expects to receive more than three million visitors annually.

GERMANY Movie Park Germany will celebrate its 25th birthday in 2021 and will mark the milestone with the introduction of a new multi-dimensional coaster from Intamin, which will be the first coaster of its kind in Europe. The new indoor ride, with no inversions, will incorporate a number of features – a dark ride with sound and special effects, two forward and backward launch sections and a 360 degree rotating platform which combined will offer a cinematic and immersive multi-media experience for all the family. The opening is planned for spring 2021. The attraction is set to be Europe's first double launch indoor coaster, Germany's first multi-directional coaster and Europe's first indoor coaster with a backward launch.

JAPAN Toshimaen, the family-friendly amusement park in Tokyo, has closed after 94 years of operation. The park opened in September 1926. With more than 30 rides and attractions, including a wooden carousel that came from Germany in 1971, Toshimaen was one of the largest amusement parks in Tokyo. In 1965, a doughnut-shaped pool was installed at the site, hailed as the world's first lazy river pool. The closure of the long-standing theme park was

marked by a "final ceremony" event, where visitors waited in long queues to go on the iconic wooden carousel ride for the last time. A majority of the 22 hectare site is to be bought by the Tokyo metropolitan government, while part of the land is to be dedicated to a new Harry Potter theme park, due to open in the first half of 2023. The site will be home to film sets, costumes and props used in the films based on the popular novels.

BELGIUM BoldMove has introduced its brand new website on www.boldmove-corp.com. Launched in April 2020 and headed by Benoit Cornet, former founder and CEO of Alterface, BoldMove offers compact and affordable solutions through a strong team and loyal partner network. On the new site visitors can learn more about the plug and play BoldMove Solutions: Smash & Reload, Sing & Rise, AR Hunt and others that will follow. The dark rides can be customised with a proprietary IP like TooMush or theming and characters of choice to fit a venue. Ride surfaces can range from ultra-compact to a standard 15m x 15m footprint and beyond to allow higher throughput. Smash & Reload can be fast and easily installed and is maintenance savvy. The attraction is future-proof as media content can be changed, rebranded or updated at any time and the easy gameplay makes it suitable for all ages.

CHINA East Lake Tianyu Garden, a comprehensive land improvement project in Zhejiang province which will include a theme park, will start construction by the end of this year. The project is located in Yuhang District, Hangzhou city, China. It will cover an area of approximately 815 hectares, with a more than CNY1.5bn (\$220m) investment. It will include a theme park, an agricultural industrial park, a village resort, a wedding dress base and a pet park. It is expected to become a high-quality destination for leisure and entertainment for the suburbs of Shanghai and Hangzhou.

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